

**VITAL THOUGHTS  
FOR A  
VICTORIOUS MARRIAGE**

**By**  
**ELVIS H. HUFFARD, SR.**

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## P R E F A C E

WHY another book? Most of these chapters first appeared in the *World Evangelist* and after spending time in writing the articles it was believed that the vital thoughts could be of greater value to have more permanent exposure. Concerned people like to do something that might change the trend away from unsuccessful marriages to successful marriages. After counseling for several years I believe that the thoughts contained in this book are vital as cures and preventatives in marriage.

Often in writing about modern marriages the picture of today's family is a dim one with emphasis on broken homes. Such emphasis may be necessary to make more people conscious of the current conditions, but we should not overlook the fact that there are victorious marriages. Victory is promised to the Christian. Satan may have his temporary victories but ultimate victory belongs to Christians. You can have a victorious home when you have the right personalities involved and are following the right pattern. That is what this book is all about.

If this book is used as a textbook for class studies the questions at the end of each chapter are designed not as a review of the topic discussed but to encourage additional research for discussion. The teacher is encouraged to spend some class period time in reviewing the written information in each chapter.

It is my prayer that *Vital Thoughts for a Victorious Marriage* may be of help to all who read and study it to experience the joys of a victorious family.

Elvis H. Huffard, Sr.

## INTRODUCTION

Elvis H. Huffard, Sr. author of this valuable book was born April 24, 1918 in Bernie, Missouri. He received his formal education from David Lipscomb College, Southeast Missouri State Teachers College, Austin Peay (B. S.), John Hopkins University and Trinity University (M. S.), Institute of Reality Therapy.

He has served as educator and administrator of schools and colleges in three nations. The principal thrust of his life has been given to preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ in twenty-five nations of the world.

As an elder and evangelist in the Church of Christ, Jesus reigns in the heart of Elvis H. Huffard, Sr.

He and his wife Emily have four children, making up a close knit, loving family. Married since 1938, the positive qualities Huffard describes in this book, have been employed by him and Emily, making him imminently qualified to write from a platform of success.

Since 1979 Huffard has conducted a Christian Counseling Service in Florence, Alabama helping men and women understand how it is possible to have a victorious marriage by applying the principles given us by Jesus Christ.

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## THE PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

I have known brother Elvis Huffard by reputation for many years. I personally met him at the Forest Park World Missions Workshop in Atlanta, Georgia in the 1970's, and I have heard him speak on other occasions.

The Huffards have been missionaries in Nigeria, worked with Freed-Hardeman College in Henderson, Tennessee, and for the past several years have lived in Florence, Alabama where brother Huffard has preached, served as an elder, and operated a counseling service.

Being missionaries at heart, both brother and sister Huffard have made many missionary trips to Nigeria and other countries and have appeared on numerous mission workshop programs. Sister Huffard also speaks to ladies meetings over the country.

Doing counseling work, brother Huffard has become keenly aware of the problems and needs in marriage and family life. This material was first presented to the students of Four Seas College of Bible and Missions in Singapore where it was subsequently printed in book form in our World Literature program.

Since the problems of marriage, divorce and remarriage here in America are paramount at this point, and the need for good marriages and strengthening the family values of our country is great, I am delighted to have a part in the printing of this book.

I therefore wish to commend brother Elvis Huffard and his book to you. My prayer would be that it may be the means of saving marriages and

building stronger homes.

J.C. Choate  
Winona, Mississippi  
June 1, 1987

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## Chapter I GOD'S TEXTBOOK ON MARRIAGE

*'Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.'* Psalm 127:1

A good textbook is very important in any worthwhile study. In order for a textbook to be good, it must represent a lot of study, research, and experience by a competent author and give direction for the study. Any study of marriage with all its complications, demands, responsibilities, and pleasures demands a dependable textbook to be used in preparation for marriage and for guidance in marriage. Relying on experience and on doing what might come naturally without a good reference book prevent many people from being properly equipped for successful marriage.

Society is filled with attitudes and philosophies that, when accepted, contribute to an age characterized by too many unsuccessful marriages. Since people are inclined to soak up attitudes and philosophies prevalent in their environment, the trend toward more unsuccessful marriages will continue unless there are conscientious efforts made to reverse the trend. A dependable standard or guide is needed, and the Bible qualifies as that needed textbook.

**GOD IS QUALIFIED TO SPEAK WITH AUTHORITY.** Every Christian should immediately accept this truth. Just think of all of God's relationships and dealings with men. In preparation for man, He created heaven and earth; He saw that the things He created were good; He created man in His image to have dominion over all that He had made and after

seeing that it was not good for man to be alone He created the woman. Giving due consideration to God as man's Creator, as one acquainted with man's need, and as one deeply interested in man's good frequently demonstrated throughout the Bible even to the giving of His son on the cross, all should readily recognize God as a dependable and qualified author speaking with authority on marriage.

God is eternal. He was in the beginning, He is today, and He will be throughout eternity. Man's span of life is but a tiny speck compared to God's existence. Man can benefit from the past and knows little about the future, but with God it is different. He knows all that is ahead. Man's judgments are very limited because he is limited, but not so with God. Since God is eternal and unlimited, His knowledge and wisdom are high above man's as the heavens are above the earth. He knows the consequences of man's behavior even into eternity, so again God is able to speak with authority.

No one can afford to leave God out in developing his understanding of marriage. If anyone tries to do so, his understanding will be void of God's wisdom, he will deprive himself of his most valuable resource, and his conclusions will lack solid foundation. On this subject as well as any subject involving moral and spiritual principles, a person who leaves God out will find himself in the following predicament described by H. G. Wells: "Until a man has found God he begins at no beginning and works toward no end."

**GOD SPEAKS TO MAN TODAY BY THE BIBLE.** Yes, God shares His infinite wisdom with man today through the Bible. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto

the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1-2). Jesus came to earth to declare God or make God known to man, and in due time he died. Before he died he made this promise: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). A similar promise states: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). The apostles were commanded to stay in Jerusalem until they received this power (Luke 24:49). While in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, they received that power when they were baptized with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak as he gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4). Eventually the New Testament was compiled by a collection of writings by the men delegated with authority to speak or write for God by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

**THE BIBLE CAN BE READ AND FOLLOWED WITH CONFIDENCE.** It is God communicating his wisdom to man by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Listen to this truth as stated by inspiration: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16-17). Since marriage is right and honorable (Heb. 13:4), it must be studied in the light of the Bible that was given for instruction in righteousness and to completely furnish man unto all good works.

The Bible is God's blueprint for marriage and other aspects of life. When its specifications and instructions are followed, people let the Lord build the house, and they can enjoy the promise that the labor that goes into the building will not be in vain (Psa. 127:1).

Another encouraging promise for the person in search of happiness in marriage stated by Christ is "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon the house, and it fell not, for it was founded on a rock" (Matt. 7:24-25). This promise was made at the close of the Sermon on the Mount, and this sermon did not leave out principles and thoughts relative to marriage. Jesus then is saying that if anyone wants a solid and lasting marriage that will stand the tests of trials and problems then follow my instructions.

The Bible if recognized as inspired of God will be appreciated as something more than the product of fallible men. Often the teachings of Paul on marriage in his letters to Corinth and Rome might be discredited by some by saying that Paul, a bachelor, was no authority on marriage. Paul did the writing but it was really God speaking by inspiration. Therefore, Paul's writings are not to be considered as just an inexperienced man expressing his bias on the subject of marriage or any other subject.

**THE OTHER OPTION, MAN, IS NOT ALWAYS DEPENDABLE.** Some very good principles in human behavior have been developed by men that

have had a positive influence on understanding behavior and have helped in finding solutions for those that are emotionally and mentally handicapped. In spite of all the positive contributions that have been made, man is still limited. Theories have been advanced as though they were laws, but after a decade or so they have been discarded because they were proved to be unreliable. Therefore, whatever has been learned about human behavior involved in the marriage relationship and whatever solutions are advanced, it is very necessary that they be checked out by God's dependable textbook, the Bible.

The wise man, Solomon, wrote, "There is a way which seemeth right unto man but the end thereof are ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). Often in marital conflicts the advice given by counselors may be the seeming solution for the moment, but the consequences may be overlooked entirely. A Christian counselor following the Bible is able to bring both the present and the future into proper focus. Here is an example:

Counselor: "What are you going to do about this conflict between your wife and you?"

Husband: "I'll just let her get a divorce."

Counselor: "Are you ready to face God with this decision?"

Husband: (Rather surprised at this question) said, "What do you mean?"

Counselor: "You believe that some day you will

stand before God at the judgment? At that time you will have to answer to God as a man that has been an unfaithful husband, and a father that has neglected his children.”

Husband: (After a long pause) “I guess we had better try to work our conflicts out.”

**GOD IS INVOLVED IN MARRIAGE. DO NOT LEAVE HIM OUT.** God joins the husband and wife in marriage. He has given the “How to” book to guide them in their daily activities. The God-man dimension should not be overlooked in any relationship including family relationships.

#### **RESEARCH AND STUDY QUESTIONS:**

1. To establish complete confidence in the Bible as a standard to follow, it is vital to believe that it is the inspired word of God. Do some research on why we can believe the Bible is from God.
2. Why can we confidently follow the instructions of the Bible in family responsibilities?
3. Read Psa. 127. What blessings can a man expect if he views his children as a heritage from God and builds his family as God directs? Are all parents today having such successful experiences? If not, why not?
4. What Bible principles can you apply to your life that would improve your relationships in the family?
5. List some family responsibilities and obligations

that should be faced today if the Bible is used as a marriage manual.

## Chapter II

# CHRIST THE MODEL PERSONALITY

*“Speaking the truth, in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ”* (Eph. 9:15).

FOR decades American people have been exposed to humanistic philosophies through music, television, movies, and in some instances public education that have contributed to the decline of the strength of the family. At the same time social changes and working conditions have impaired the vital functions of the family. The divorce rate continues to climb to now better than one divorce is granted for every three marriages. These factors and others that have weakened the family have been used by some to predict the demise of the traditional family. Other countries have been influenced by the same philosophies with the same results to the family.

The weakening of the family did not take place over night, but the process has been going on for some time. Robert C. Sorensen wrote a book in the early seventies based on a questionnaire designed to indicate the personal values and sexual behavior held by the thirteen to nineteen year old children that participated in the research. Here are some of the responses:<sup>1</sup>

A statement made by a girl fifteen: “I wouldn’t label any sex acts immoral. Nothing I can think of. Take rape, obviously somebody likes rape. But not even rape is immoral, you know. It’s bad, of course. I have a derogatory opinion of

the word immoral. Anti-God, it's meaningless, the whole word. The more widespread something becomes the less badly it's accepted. Prostitution isn't immoral anymore."

A boy seventeen said, "I don't have any written book on right or wrong, but I do believe that Jesus Christ died as my Savior. There are no moral punishments to what I have done because usually when I do have sex with a person I do care about them in one way or another."

Sorensen recorded the following indicating the thinking of these young people:

"Exactly one-half of all adolescents rarely, if ever go to religious services but still think of themselves as being fairly religious."

"Of those that say they are very religious, 40% concede that they sometimes take part in sexual activities that are not consistent with their religious beliefs."

"Thirty-four percent of all adolescents either view God as a somewhat impersonal force or assume their sex life is of little relevance to God."

"When homosexuality 'makes you feel good,' or when one or both homosexual partners believe they love each other, many adolescents not only do not oppose homosexuality but in fact support it for any young people who have

these reactions.”

A good number of girls replied true to this statement:

“Abortions are so easy to get these days that I don’t really worry about getting pregnant.”

It is easy to see that many young people are confused and are without a dependable standard on which to anchor their relationships and responsibilities in marriage. Even those that have been exposed to God’s standard by church attendance often fail to be impressed by it for one reason or another. The adolescents in Sorensen’s research have now joined the adults that taught them and provided the models for them, and the current statistics reveal the consequences of the influence of humanistic philosophies on the backbone of society.

The family has been weakened, and little thinking is needed to see that some kind of model for all to follow is needed to restore the home to the level of importance and strength that God intended for it to have.

**WHERE CAN THE MODEL BE FOUND?** A model is needed that will help all members of the family to find fulfillment in a peaceful family. Not all models can be depended on to do this for some can be actively divisive. So as solutions are sought recognition should be given to the fact that some recommended solutions add to the problems.

Dr. Jay E. Adams tells about his first day in an elementary psychology course at Johns Hopkins

University. The professor sat on the desk and read aloud the sensational headlines of the morning newspaper. Finally he looked up and said, "The world is in a mess." Then he spent the rest of the hour in explaining how psychology is the world's one hope for straightening out that mess. This class took place in the early 1950's and in response to this class and the professor's remarks Dr. Adams said:

"But the newspaper headlines have not improved; crime is on the increase; our streets have become unsafe; there are riots in our cities; and the mental institutions in spite of tranquilizers, still do a thriving business."<sup>2</sup>

The knowledge of human behavior, the mental processes, or personality can be very useful in understanding people that are involved in families, but to depend on psychology to provide the only models to strengthen the family has serious shortcomings. It is regrettable that some in the profession see themselves in the role of the most qualified to provide the models.

Paul C. Vitz, a psychologist in the department of psychology at New York University, in his book, *Psychology As Religion, The Cult of Self-Worship*, "argued that psychology has become a religion, in particular, a form of secular humanism based on worship of the self." He makes a strong case for these five thesis:

1. "Psychology as religion exists, and it exists in great strength throughout the United States.
2. Psychology as a religion can be criticized on

many grounds quite independent of religion.

- 3. Psychology as a religion is deeply anti-Christian. Indeed, it is hostile to most religions.
- 4. Psychology as a religion is extensively supported by schools, universities, and social programs financed by taxes collected from millions of Christians. Their use of tax money to support what has become a secular state religion raises grave political and legal issues.
- 5. Psychology as religion has for years been destroying individuals, families, and communities. But for the first time the destructive logic of this secular religion is beginning to be understood, and as more and more people discover the emptiness of self-worship Christianity is presented with a major historical opportunity to provide meaning to life.”<sup>3</sup>

An observation that can be made here is that if selfism produces the model, it has a tendency to divide rather than unite a family.

Not all psychologists are guilty of making psychology a religion, but they see the need of the recognition of religion in developing the wholeness of man. This is aptly expressed by Margaretta K. Bowers, M. D. in her book, *Conflicts of the Clergy*, when she wrote:

“When one accepts a patient into therapy, one undertakes to work within the framework of the patient’s life. One has to accept certain pre-conditions as operative throughout the analysis. In working with professional religionists one can no more ignore or get rid of religion

than overlook the need of human relationships. The therapist who is truly dedicated to his profession can only search for the means of helping his patients to a healthier and fuller life in the context of his patient's needs both within himself and within his community.”<sup>4</sup>

The God-Man relationship cannot be overlooked for herein is found the cohesiveness of tying all to the same God. The principle of “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that do build it” (Psa. 127:1) must not be ignored in the search for the needed model for the family. After lecturing to a group of Christians on Christian counseling in Cape Town, South Africa, one man responded by saying this to me. “I am a criminal psychologist. For several years I felt ineffective as a counselor because there was a great void in my life, for I was an atheist. Since becoming a Christian I have added a dimension to my life and the lives of those that I influence to make them more meaningful.” In recent years more psychologists are recognizing the importance of this dimension and are writing helpful books showing this. In addition to the books and authors already mentioned others like Lawrence Crabb Jr.,<sup>5</sup> H. Norman Wright,<sup>6</sup> John White,<sup>7</sup> and Jerry Schmidt<sup>8</sup> have written some very good books showing that a Biblical based approach to counseling can be effective.

**CHRIST IS THAT MODEL.** Before we look at the model let us look at the grievances husbands and wives have toward each other that lead to unsuccessful marriages.

A list of grievances ranked according to

seriousness was made in a study by L. M. Terman in *Psychological Factors in Marital Happiness*. Here is the order given by the husbands about their wives:

(1) Nags me, (2) not affectionate, (3) selfish and inconsiderate, (4) complains too much, (5) interferes with hobbies, (6) slovenly in appearance, (7) quick tempered, (8) interferes with my discipline, (9) conceited, (10) is insincere, (11) feelings too easily hurt, (12) criticizes me, (13) narrow-minded, (14) neglects the children, (15) a poor housekeeper, (16) argumentative, (17) has annoying habits, (18) untruthful, (19) interferes in business, (20) spoils the children.

Here are the complaints in order as given by the wives toward their husbands:

(1) Selfish and inconsiderate, (2) unsuccessful in business, (3) is untruthful, (4) complains too much, (5) does not show his affection, (6) does not talk things over, (7) harsh with children, (8) touchy, (9) has no interest in children, (10) not interested in home, (11) not affectionate, (12) rude, (13) lacks ambition, (14) nervous or impatient, (15) criticizes me, (16) poor management of income, (17) narrow-minded, (18) not faithful to me, (19) lazy, (20) bored with my small talk.

A study of these two lists showed that very few have to do with conditions, but most of them either directly or indirectly are related to personality faults such as emotional instability or other personality difficulties. Since these husband-wife grievances are still very much in evidence today, where is the model that can loose husbands and wives from the chains of destructive practices in the family? If most of the faults are based on personality

makeup, the simple answer is that the solution to problems is the development of a Christ-like personality.

In doctrine Christian people have declared that Christ is the answer, but often in practice some other influences take the place of Christ. Thus showing a lack of confidence in Christ, and such has been true in family difficulties. Some even ask, "How can Christ be the answer to my family problems when He was never married?" Any responsible relationship begins with being the right kind of person whether married or not. Before marriage everyone exists as an individual, and that individual is the one that is brought into marriage. A personality patterned after Christ qualifies us to face eventualities in life successfully.

God esteemed the development of a Christian personality important enough to make this one of the objectives of the church. Listen to Paul describe this to the church at Ephesus:

"And he gave some apostles: and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, *unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*: that we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, *may grow up into him in all things*, which the head even Christ:" (Eph. 4:11-15).

Paul explained the development of the Christian's personality as he wrote further to the

## Ephesians.

"However this is not the way you learned about Christ. You heard about him. Then you were taught in him. (The truth is in Jesus) You were taught to put away your old way of living. It will destroy you. Those evil desires can fool you. You were taught to develop a new way of thinking. You were taught to be clothed with a new personality like that of God. It was created with true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore put away lying. Let each one speak the truth to the other person. We are all parts of each other, you are allowed to become angry, but don't sin, and don't stay angry all day. Don't give the devil a chance. The person that steals must not steal anymore. Instead, he must work hard, using his own hands to do good, so that he may have something to share with someone who needs it. Don't let any rotten word come out of your mouth. Instead, say something good to build up what is missing. Then it will be a blessing to those who hear it. Don't make God's Holy Spirit sad. You were sealed with the Spirit for the Day of freedom. May all bitterness, anger, grudges, yelling, and cursing — every kind of evil — be taken away from you. Have tender feelings and be kind to one another. Forgive one another just as God, in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4: 20-32, SEB).

As this model to a successful marriage is examined many traits of his personality could be discussed with profit, but now consideration will be given to three very important ones.

### 1. A trait in the personality of Jesus was

**submissiveness to the will of God.** He taught his disciples to pray, "Thy will be done." In his struggles over the death he faced he prayed, "If it be thy will let this cup pass from me." He submitted to the will of God in his death on the cross.

A Christ-like personality today would be just as submissive. To have such a personality would mean that when the success and happiness of a home is threatened the solution would be sought first of all, not to see who would win or who would lose, but all would search for and abide by solutions that are in harmony with the will of God. Even Christian counselors have few clients that come to them for counseling that first of all express the desire to consider God's will foremost in the solutions sought. Too often when God's will is in conflict with feelings and popular actions people defy God instead of submitting to him. When this is true they drop the key to a successful marriage and will suffer the consequences.

**2. Another basic trait in the personality of Jesus was love.** He demonstrated this loving characteristic in so many ways: teaching, healing the sick, raising the dead, and dying on the cross. "Greater love hath no one than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). He demonstrated the ultimate in the love that he had. The application of a loving personality is commanded for husbands. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). In the love that Christ had for the church husbands have a model for their love for their wives, and what an example it is!

This example of Christ and the church provides

the foundation for a sexual ethic, for it is the same relationship between Christ and the church. The understanding of the love relationship between Christ and the church founds the permanence of the love in the husband-wife relationship, as well as importance of sexual fidelity. Christ made no plans except for one church (Eph. 1:22-23, 4:4). The understanding of that love husbands are to have for their wives becomes more meaningful with a little consideration given to the church that Jesus loves. Often the church is composed of unloveable beings, yet Christ loves it. A glance at the history of the church or to look at the conditions that existed in the Corinthian church could cause some to ask, "How can he love the church?" As he judged the seven churches of Asia in the book of Revelation and found so many conditions that were disappointing he still loved them.

What does this say about a loving personality? When a loving personality obeys the command of God to love his mate he truly will mean and demonstrate throughout his life the vow often spoken at the wedding, "For better or worse." Loves does not desert the family while facing problems but is long-suffering.

**3. Jesus demonstrated great self-discipline.** While others were eating they asked him to eat, but his answer was: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). Because Jesus became flesh doing the will of the Father was not always easy, for he was tempted just as we are tempted, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). As a hungry man he was offered the opportunity of

commanding the rocks to become bread, the care of the angels if he would cast himself from the pinnacle of the temple, and to have the kingdoms of the world if he would worship the devil. He had the self-discipline to reject each temptation because they were not in keeping with the word of God (Matt. 4:1-11).

This powerful self-discipline was exercised in the approach to the cross. In the garden as Jesus agonized over his death he prayed, "Oh my Father, if it be possible, let this cup (of suffering S. E. B.) pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). With the approaching of the mob death got closer, and then another incident happened that showed his discipline. Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of a servant of the high priest. Jesus told Peter to put up his sword, and then made this comment: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53). Instead of doing what most would have done he disciplined himself to say, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11).

A Christ-like personality would have traits of submission, love, and self-discipline. Now review all the husband-wife grievances plus any other grievances that you might be given by husbands and wives and relate them to this model of a Christian personality. Two things ought to be easily observed: A Christian personality would prevent most of the grievances, and then if grievances develop a Christian personality could unlock the problem.

So we have the answer — A Christian personality. More thought should be given to such a personality by parents as they provide the immediate model

for children, and as they observe the development of personality in their children. More effort should be put forth by the church to the development of Christian personality because this is one of the important functions of the church. Too many times the church only becomes concerned with personality when they select a preacher or appoint elders, but since personality faults are so plentiful and the influence on the family and the church is so destructive renewed effort should be put forth to encourage everyone in the fellowship to grow up to be like Jesus in everything.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Robert C. Sorensen, *Adolescent Sexuality in Contemporary America*, (New York: World Pub., 1973) pgs. 92, 95, 97, 286, 323.
2. Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1970) p. 1.
3. Paul C. Vitz, *Psychology as Religion, The Cult of Self-Worship* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Erdmans Pub. Co., 1979) p. 9, 10.
4. Margaretta K. Bowers, M. D., *Conflicts of the Clergy* (New York, Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1963) p. 73.
5. Lawrence J. Crabb, Jr. *Effective Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1977). *Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling* (Zondervan Pub. House, 1975).

6. H. Norman Wright, *Marital Counseling* (Denver, CO, Christian Marriage Enrichment, 1981).
7. John White, *Eros Defiled*, (Downers Grove, IL University Press, 1977).
8. Jerry Schmidt, *You Can Help Yourself* (Irvine, CA, Harvest House Publishers, 1978).

#### ACTIVITIES AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Make a record of the exposures that you will have to humanistic philosophies the next week through the following:
  - a. Music
  - b. Television
  - c. Movies
  - d. School
2. Study Col. 2:8. What timely warning is given that might be applied to family relationships today? What are some of the philosophies accepted today by many people that are not after Christ?
3. Make a survey in different groups by asking questions relating to model identity to see if people have a clear basis for their morality. Formulate your questionnaire in class so as to get the thinking of the class on what questions to ask.
4. Check the list of husband-wife grievances with

yourself in mind. Can you identify with any of the grievances? What can you do about it?

5. In addition to the traits of Jesus discussed add others like forgiveness and compassion and then discuss what a difference these traits would make in family relationships.

## Chapter III

### BASIC OBLIGATIONS IN MARRIAGE

*“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall become one flesh.” Genesis 2:24*

*“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder.” Matthew 19:6*

MANY Americans have ideas about freedom, liberation, and independence that cause them to believe that these words will lose their meaning to them if they get married. They do not want to be obligated to anyone, so they do not get married, or they live with a partner with an understanding that there will be no obligations. All worthwhile relationships have obligations. Liberation from obligations to another person destroys the possibility of receiving benefits from that person in the relationship. Even those who live together without marriage admit that this arrangement can succeed only when there is commitment, and there are obligations in commitment. Complete freedom is lost in marriage as two people become one, but the compensations far outweigh the losses if the marriage is successful and fulfilling.

Obligations in marriage vary from place to place and from time to time as reflected in the roles people are expected to play in marriage. No longer is a wife in a rural area considered lazy if she does not chop wood for the cook stove. Some roles are so demanding and rigid that they do seem to enslave and become more than some can fulfill. Obligations

in marriage should not destroy one's individuality, for although God joins the husband and wife together, in His sight they are still individuals to stand before Him at the judgment (II Cor. 5:10).

Society is changing, and there is the tendency on the part of many to cast aside everything that is traditional as they try to update the marriage relationships. To some degree man is free to change as he tries to fit the family into today's society, but caution must be exercised to avoid rushing into the flood of change and overlook some very basic concepts. There are some very basic obligations in the family that have not changed since the beginning and will not change. These basic concepts are not to be considered basic because the author of this book so identifies them, but they are basic because God's textbook, the Bible, so recognizes them as recorded by Moses in the text, cited by Christ in Matt. 19:5 and Mark 10:7-8, and repeated by Paul in Eph. 5:31.

**THEREFORE SHALL A MAN LEAVE HIS FATHER AND HIS MOTHER.** Because of the necessary companionship designed by God for marriage and the intimacies to be enjoyed by husbands and wives, a breaking away from the two older families is necessary. This is an obligation that each marriage partner owes to the other. Suggested in this obligation is more than living outside the home where mother and father live, it demands a certain amount of maturity to appreciate marriage and to face the vital obligations in marriage. Marriage is for mature people and is not to be considered "kid stuff." There is no magical age where one becomes mature immediately and is ready for marriage. In most states eighteen is the age one can get married without parental

consent, but being eighteen does not mean that one is automatically ready for marriage. Statistics prove otherwise, for in many of the studies that have been made marriages made by people nineteen and under have almost twice the number of divorces as those of twenty and over.

To leave father and mother for marriage demands a certain amount of emotional maturity if the marriage succeeds. In maturity one should be able to think objectively by getting outside himself and seeing his relationships realistically, to discriminate between facts and feelings, and then to be able to build upon facts. Marriage is to be seen realistically, not as an escape from reality where one lives on cloud nine all the time, but realize marriage may have its problems as well as the potential for great happiness. Since love is the basis of a good husband-wife relationship, it, too, must be based on reality. Young people go through different types of love, but with maturity they find that love must be supported by facts and not fantasy.

Another important consideration influencing the ability to leave father and mother involves the parents. Parents should prepare their children for the possibility of leaving home. Eventually parents must let their children go. Well meaning parents may not be reflecting the proper attitude when a daughter marries and they say, "We did not lose a daughter, but gained a son." If this attitude thwarts the young couple from fulfilling their God-given obligation of leaving father and mother, parents will be interfering with what God wants for the newly married couple.

**AND SHALL CLEAVE UNTO HIS WIFE.**  
Leaving father and mother is just the first step and an

important one. Now comes the lifelong process of cleaving to each other. The idea here is that the husband and wife are to be united, or that they are to hold fast to each other. This is not always easy to accomplish for two people coming from separate backgrounds with different personalities, but nevertheless it is a God-given obligation. The necessary adjustments can be made by mature Christian people who truly love each other.

The cleaving to each other starts in earnest at the wedding, and the first year is very important in this process. Recognition of this is made in the Old Testament with the following ordinance. "When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business; but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken" (Deut. 24:5). The process continues through life and is mentioned as one of the comforts of life by Solomon when he said, "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity" (Eccl. 9:9). Love is the basis of this cleaving.

Often after the honeymoon period is over the husband becomes very much involved in his work, and the wife becomes equally involved in her responsibilities and little time is given to each other. Gradually they lose interest in each other. In time, the husband does not know where he stands with his wife, and the wife does not know where she stands with her husband. Thus, there is a failure to face their first human obligation. The cleaving erodes, doubts set in, loneliness is suffered by one or both, and the relationship fails.

The obligation of cleaving is important after

children are born into the family. Fathers and mothers continue to have needs to be met that can be met only as husbands and wives. Children need the model daily before them of Christian parents meeting their God-given obligations. Their security is enhanced by having parents that cleave to each other in love. If the cleaving continues through child rearing there will not be the loneliness of the home after the children leave that is characterized by husbands and wives that grow apart and face the later years as strangers living in the same house.

**THEY SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.** Here is the ultimate in marriage, the final accomplishment when two people leave father and mother and cleave to each other. Often this oneness is explained in terms of the one act of sex, but the total union of two personalities involves more than one act regardless of how important the one act might be. There are several arrangements two people might make in becoming one. Some demonstrate the two becoming one, and that one is the husband. Others are examples of the two becoming one, and that one is the wife. Many try to meet halfway. None of the above truly describes the meaning. In marriage there is commitment to each other, dedication to each other, and dependence on each other (see I Cor. 7:1-4).

This basic obligation of oneness can be met with less difficulty if the husband and wife have a lot in common, such as religion, education, interests, economic values, etc. The proper balance in oneness can best be if two people would think more in terms of the needs of the other rather than concentrating on what is best for self.

**LET NOT MAN PUT ASUNDER.** After Jesus

commented on the oneness of the husband and wife in marriage, he added, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). From this statement anyone can understand that God is involved in marriage as he joins the two together, and he makes marriage a permanent contract. Divorce and remarriage defies God plus such actions can put one in a state of adultery with its many serious consequences in the eyes of God. Jesus said, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matt. 19:9). Truly a basic obligation in marriage is a commitment of until death do us part (Rom. 7:2-3).

**MARRIAGE IS AT ITS BEST WHEN BASIC OBLIGATIONS ARE MET.** The basic obligations are given by God who knows what is best. Statistics back up what God has said. Do not experiment with marriage. Every effort should be made to start a marriage off by following God's instructions with great determination to understand and meet the basic obligations.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How important are roles (expectations) in a family?
2. Think of role changes that have taken place in our society in the last few decades. What are they?
3. In a society where there are role changes frustration and friction are common and understandable. Give examples of this.

4. In industrialized societies the extended family has changed to a self-contained suburbia family of father, mother and children. What are some of the problems that have developed because of this change?
5. Some roles may change, but should we think that basic obligations can change in the same manner? Why?
6. What are the full implications you see in the basic obligation of leaving father and mother?
7. What characteristics of maturity should a person have before he gets married?
8. What problems can develop if a mother and father refuse to let a child go after he/she is married?
9. What are the full implications that you see in the basic obligation of cleaving to each other? Name some ways this obligation is neglected.
10. What are some very serious consequences when the basic commitment of “Until death do us part,” is terminated before death?

## Chapter IV THE GLUE FACTORY – THE HOME THAT STICKS

*“And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”* Colossians 3:14 RSV

A glance at the rise of the divorce rate in America today indicates that vows often spoken at wedding ceremonies like for richer or poorer, for better or worse, and until death do us part have very little meaning. Commitment is overlooked as a vital factor in two people living together as evidenced in the falling apart of so many families. Recently in the *Wall Street Journal* in response to an article on “More Marriages Are Coming Apart Today Than Ever Before,” Richard Armor wrote this little poem:

If this is how things are  
If this is really true  
Instead of marriage vows  
We need a marriage glue.

There is more truth than poetry in the above lines. The time has come when a diligent search must be made to find elements as cohesive as Elmer’s glue is advertised to be in order to glue families back together. Attention will be given to two elements that have great cohesive power that, if utilized, will change the trend away from family disintegration.

**LOVE HAS GREAT BINDING POWER.** In the beginning God placed the responsibility on the husband to cleave to his wife (Gen. 2:24). This

becomes possible for two people from different backgrounds when they love each other (Eph. 5:25; Titus 2:4). All relationships in the human family as well as God's family find strength for unity in loving each other, for inspiration teaches that it puts everything together in perfect harmony (Col. 3:14).

The great power of love is described in I Cor. 13. Read it again and again in different translations of the New Testament as it points out the greatness of love. Note the characteristics that have binding strength for family members. Love is patient for it suffereth long. The lack of patience severs relationships. Love is not jealous. Jealousy is very divisive. Love is not rude and does not insist on having its own way. Therefore, love is able to overcome the disunity caused by rudeness and everyone wanting to have his own way. Love is not resentful, and it can resolve the competitiveness caused by resentment. Love does not rejoice at wrong or sin that divides but is supportive of truth. Love endures all things, and this would include the things that might dissolve the unity. There is no doubt about it when the *Agape* (love) of the New Testament is cultivated there is a binding together of all the hearts that are involved.

Further cohesive power is seen when giving is recognized as the very essence of love. God who is love (I John 4:8) loves us. He gave his beloved Son because he loved us (John 3:16). As people share, they are brought closer together. If getting all you can is the aim in a relationship such has a tendency to separate. All have to recognize that binding love has to be mature love. Paul described the measure of this mature love as he talked to the elders from

Ephesus by reminding them that he had taught the following from Jesus while he was with them: "You will be happier when you give than when you receive" (Acts 20:35, SEB). When two people form a relationship where they are more interested in giving than they are in getting, they will be cementing themselves together year by year.

Now a very important question should be considered. How is this love developed? The most logical place is the home. Fortunate is the child that is the product of a mother and father that love each other, for under these circumstances it is a lot easier for the child to be recognized as a heritage of God (Psa. 127:3) by the parents, and that natural love then flows toward the child by parents who give of themselves as they express the necessary love in meeting the needs of the child. Modern-day psychiatrists are not the first to discover that each child is born with the need to be loved. Mothers of old were taught to love their children (Titus 2:4).

This necessary love is first received from the mother whom nature has equipped to take care of the first needs of the baby, and then the father gets the message of love over to the baby. The baby then has a model to imitate and loves because he is loved. The baby responds to love in the human family as we respond to God's love, for we love him because he first loved us (I John 4:19). If the chain of expressions of love meeting the needs of the individual is broken, there will be lasting emotional scars and an unloving personality will be developed. Such a personality will find it difficult to form lasting and worthwhile relationships through life.

Before any home becomes completely unglued,

observations should be made to see if love is visible in the home. If there is a deficiency of this all-important element, every effort ought to be made to start cultivating this great power.

**THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION HAS GREAT POWER TO BIND TOGETHER.** Because religion comes in so many brands and divisions, many do not appreciate its influence toward family togetherness. For some families religion is the basic factor that divides it. The meaning of religion is to be intensively bound to something. If one stops at this, religion can become very divisive, because members of a family can be intensively bound to different churches, creeds, and philosophies. But when the Christian religion is seen as being intensively bound to God through Jesus Christ, it becomes a great encouragement to harmony in all relationships. When two people or a family are bound intensively to one God through one mediator, Jesus Christ, they then become bound to each other. The closer they are to God, the closer they are to each other.

By marriageable age most people have a pattern of religious orientation or nonreligious orientation that influences the personality makeup. If both husband and wife have about the same orientation, there will be fewer conflicting situations in their relationships, and their everyday experiences will be more productive of happiness. Without a doubt, the Christian religion does bind people together.

Evidences of the stickability of religion can be found in research. Studies indicate that the rate of divorces among the nonreligious is higher than among the religious. Children from devout Christian homes seem to be closer to their parents and by this

are somewhat better prepared for life. Among the religious there seems to be the opportunity of developing higher self-concepts, a greater ability to make friends of the opposite sex, and to approach marriage with a greater feeling of confidence.

Being one in Christ and active in his service provides opportunity for family activities. Many institutions tend to separate the family, but church activities can build up a family as they worship and study together. Church going acquires a special significance. The family on a regular basis dresses up showing that it is something special where everything else is put aside for it. Each member of the family is important and involved in such activities. Truly the family that worships together has the tendency to stay together.

**OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION AND THE FAMILY.** There are many New Testament teachings that pave the way for sticking together in addition to the one that says the wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives (Rom. 7:2). Here are a few of them:

1. The individual is recognized and responsible (Gal. 6:5, Acts 2:38; 8:12).
2. Christianity impels one toward unselfishness and compassion for others (Gal. 5: 22; 6:2; Acts 20:35).
3. Love is the foundation for all relationships (I Cor. 13).
4. Christianity demands self-discipline (I Cor. 9:27; II Pet. 1:6).
5. Christ encourages true happiness (Matt. 5:1-12).

In these passages recognition and consideration are given to the individual as well as instructing him to be considerate of others in his community.

Institutions and homes are falling apart. This is not the first time history has recorded such events. It has happened before and it will happen again. This should not cause one to see current events as natural and without recovery. Because people are in the midst of disintegration of homes today, they should seek solutions to stop the trend. When a treasured piece of furniture starts coming unglued, the owner tries to glue it back together. A treasured relationship can dissolve but it doesn't have to. Every member of a family as soon as he is aware that the family is coming unglued ought to get out the Bible and in love follow its directions, and the home will be better for it.

#### RESEARCH STUDIES:

1. Do additional study on how love tends to bind everything (especially the family relationships) together in perfect harmony (Col. 3:14).
2. Religion can unite or it can be divisive. Show how religion could hinder in some cases and help in other cases in making the proper adjustments in the following areas in the family:
  - a. Religious activities
  - b. Recreation
  - c. In-law relationships
  - d. Sex

- e. Finances
- f. Education of children
- g. Friends

3. Discuss with people who are involved in mixed-marriages in religion and see what advice they would give to a single person about mixed-marriages.

## Chapter V IS IT REAL LOVE?

*“Husbands love your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it” Ephesians 5:25*

*“That they may teach the younger women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children” Titus 2:4*

MARRIAGE is a permanent contract, “For the woman that hath a husband is bound by law to her husband while he liveth; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband” (Rom. 7:2). During the course of fulfilling this lifetime commitment, two people from separate backgrounds, living as intimately as husbands and wives must live, will face situations and circumstances that will strain their relationship. Since the average family faces adjustments, sickness, death, and other adversities too numerous to mention, there must be a solid foundation to be able to survive these things that threaten the harmony of the family. God through the Bible identifies love as this foundation (Eph. 5:25; Titus 2:4).

WHAT IS LOVE? Since lasting family relationships are based on love, it is very important to have some understanding about love. It is very difficult to find a definition of love suitable for all references made about love. Because of this, often marriage is entered into or experienced with declarations of “I love you” freely being made, but with no real support given to overcoming differences and to undergirding a lasting relationship. A declaration of love like

people declare for ice cream does nothing for a lasting relationship for it, like ice cream, can soon melt. Likewise, declarations of love by the immature or neurotic for a mate that clutches and clings in such a way that the relationship becomes unbearable and has to be dissolved in order for that mate to survive. Such declarations lack depth of understanding. It is very important for a person contemplating marriage to transcend the vagueness and have some understanding or what mature love is and how it behaves.

The New Testament in its original language has two words that are translated into English as love. In most cases the original language has different meanings for the two words. *Philia* is used to indicate the emotion of a strong feeling, attraction, or friendship. *Agape* involves the intelligence expressing itself by behavior. *Eros* is the classic Greek word for romantic or sexual love. *Eros* is not found in the New Testament but it is likely implied in Christ's statement, "He who made them from the beginning made them male and female" (Matt. 19:4). Since the beginning there has been that natural attraction between males and females.

The best definition for lasting love is, "God is love" (I John 4:8). The best way then to understand love is to know about God and his love. It is no wonder that Paul said, "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three but the greatest of these is love" (I Cor. 12:13). For when one truly loves he partakes of part of the Divine Nature. Behavior based on love will imitate the love that God has for his creation. Therefore, the criteria for love is not how our behavior stacks up to the expectations of our "love-oriented" society but more on how it compares

with the love demonstrated by God.

Love between a man and woman sufficient to support a lifetime of marriage is more than *eros* (often the original physical attraction) for it must mature to include *philia* (an emotional attraction, companionship, and friendship) and *agape* (a rational development of concern, understanding, and self-giving) patterned after God's love toward mankind. *Agape* is the key word. If *agape* is between the husband and wife, with time and intimate experiences both *philia* and *eros* can be enjoyed. Fortunate is the husband-wife relationship that this bound by all three.

**TESTS OF SUFFICIENT LOVE FOR MARRIAGE.** Often this question is asked by conscientious people, "How can I tell if I am really in love?" This is a very difficult question to answer for there are so many different formulas used to try to identify real love. There are a few questions to consider that might shed some light on determining the maturity of love possessed. Consider the following:

1. **Is your love more interested in giving than getting?** Since love begins with God, for he is love, a close examination of God's love reveals that he proved his love by giving his son, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son" (John 3:16). Jesus loved the church and he, too, proved his love for the church by giving himself for the church (Eph. 5:25). In response to God's love man is to love God (I John 4:19) and is to love others (I John 4:11). Love for God is expressed in giving ourselves in obedience (John 14:15) to God and in loving our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:39). Paul

reminded the elders from Ephesus of what Jesus had taught when he said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Much of the teaching on love in the New Testament is directed toward maintaining the fellowship of believers in the church in lasting peace. All that is said is relevant to the love that is necessary to maintain a lasting relationship between the husband and wife. The essence of love is giving or serving (giving of self). Is this reflected in your love?

**2. How does your love measure up to the characteristics of love in I Cor. 13?** In this chapter Paul described the characteristics of the love that can bind the church made up of different people with different gifts into a perfect unity. He called love the more excellent way (I Cor. 12:31). To the Colossians he said, “And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col. 3:14). Again, what was taught the early church to help them in their fellowship is very appropriate for all in the family relationships today.

Note first of all that declared love alone can be just a lot of noise. Knowledge of all things relevant to the family is not enough. Giving of a lot of things may be of no value. Expressions of love, knowledge of human behavior, and giving are necessary and meaningful when motivated by love. Such a vital foundation for human relationships demands more explanation so Paul continued by stating the characteristics of love. It is a good exercise for anyone who wants to evaluate his love to test it by these inspired characteristics:

a. **Love is patient.** The Greek word

used here always describes patience with people and not patience with circumstances.

b. **Love is kind.** Words spoken and deeds done should indicate that they come from a heart that is benevolent, good-natured, and understanding.

c. **Love envieth not or is not jealous.** The object of one's love is not considered in competition with the lover, for he rejoices if his mate has ability even if it exceeds his.

d. **Love is not boastful.** Real love is humbling as the loved one often thinks in terms of who am I to be loved so sincerely? The humility experienced is quite different from the husband who thinks his wife is so lucky to have him love her.

e. **Love is not arrogant, not puffed up or not proud.** In a loving relationship there is no need and no room for a feeling of self-importance, for there is security in being accepted without any pretenses.

f. **Love is not rude.** Love does not behave itself unseemly or gracelessly. True love includes consideration, tact, and politeness.

g. **Love does not insist on having its own way or seeketh not her own.** Some people spend much of their time demanding their rights and little time fulfilling their obligations. True love does not insist on getting all the privileges but constantly remembers responsibilities. Uppermost in the mind of a true love is the lasting benefit for the loved.

h. **Love is not irritable or easily provoked.** Responses in a love relationship are void

of explosive and abusive language. Love is even-tempered.

i. **Love is not resentful or thinketh no evil.** The idea here is that love does not keep a record of wrongs done by the object of his love. It holds no grudges. Christian love forgives and forgets, and this would be applicable to members of a family.

j. **Love does not rejoice at wrong but rejoices in the right.** Love does not overlook sin but it does not rejoice at it. The rejoicing is at good and right things. Efforts are made in love to correct wrong deeds, so there can be rejoicing in the good results.

k. **Love bears all things.** In close relationships there will be burdens (sickness, death, weakness, debts, and sorrows) to be borne, therefore it is vital that such maturity of love be present in the relationship. Love does not produce quitters.

l. **Love believes all things.** In relation to members of the family or prospective mates, there should be complete trust.

m. **Love hopes all things.** Responses are influenced by what others expect and hope for. In love there is a basis for better things to come.

n. **Love endures all things.** Included in this is more than just seeing how much of a load one can carry but where can the load be taken. Adversity and burdens are transferred to assets.

o. **Love never ends.** A husband-wife relationship is a permanent one so love is

continually needed as a basis of that relationship. If it is patterned after the everlasting love of God, it will never end.

**3. Is it love or lust?** Since God made man and woman in the beginning, they seem to be attracted to each other, although this attraction varies from individual to individual. There is nothing particularly wrong with this attraction, but the morality of it depends on what direction it takes. The husband-wife relationship can provide the ultimate in happiness on earth if it is built on the right foundation. In the male-female associations opportunities are given to develop a basis of love or lust. The many demands of marriage and the permanency of marriage is very dependent on the development of love as has already been pointed out. Since this is true, every effort must be made by those approaching marriage, to cultivate the love declared at the wedding. A good question to ponder, "Is it love or lust?"

**a. What is lust?** In the male-female associations, lust is to have strong desires, burn with sexual desire, or passion. Jesus said, "But I am telling you that when any man continues looking at a woman because he wants her sexually, he has already in his heart committed adultery with her" (Matt. 5:28, SEB). The Christian does not respond to this attraction by doing whatever comes to his mind, but he disciplines himself for he follows the teaching of the scripture that says, "Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire,

and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col. 3:5).

b. **Lust is to be avoided.** One cannot say that because God made us male and female lust is the natural response to the opposite sex, and everyone else is doing it so one is justified in lustful behavior. James said, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man? but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. Then lust, when it is conceived, beareth sin, and sin when it is full grown, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1: 13-15). It is important to recognize lust as sin and see the consequences both immediate and eternal. Avoid lust and cultivate love (II Tim. 2:22).

c. **What are some differences between love and lust?** There are some feelings and behavior both in love and lust that are overlapping, but there are some basic differences that can help in exploring this question. Here are some differences between love (*agape*) and lust that influence the husband-wife relationship:

1) When love is in the relationship it flows in both directions while lust flows mostly in one direction, toward self. Love is giving while lust emphasizes getting. When lust is the basis, after one is satisfied little attention is given to a mate.

2) Love is a learned art or operation while lust is known naturally and

is inspired by the biological structure of human beings.

3) Love requires constant effort while lust takes little or no effort. Love is a controlled art whether one feels like it or not. Lust is largely influenced by feeling and biological urges while love (*agape*) can be a response to a command of God (Eph. 5:25).

4) Love shows concern for the reputation of one loved while lust is more interested in self-gratification regardless of consequences. Premarital sex would not be encouraged by a Christian motivated by love, because the activity would jeopardize their relationship with God, for such is sinful.

5) Love tends to be interested in the whole person while lust is often limited to interest in sexual stimulation and gratification.

6) Love is the greatest of faith, hope, and love (I Cor. 13:13). While lust is part of the man of sin that must be cast off (Col. 3:5).

Too much stress cannot be placed on the need to recognize love and to cultivate love as the proper basis for the husband-wife relationship in a successful family. On the other hand, lust has the following tendencies:

- a. To divide as each one seeks self-gratification in momentary pleasure.
- b. As physical attraction wanes as the

couple gets older, interest wanes.

c. Children often are the products of lust rather than love and start off in life with a strike against them.

**THE CHRISTIAN'S APPROACH TO MARRIAGE IS DIFFERENT.** Today immorality is getting almost as blatant as it was in the New Testament world. Marriage vows are becoming less meaningful. People are being exposed by means of movies and television to almost any manner of sinful lifestyle as being acceptable. It is very timely to consider the uncompromising demand of God such as: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who know not God" (I Thess. 4:3-5). Scholars like Robertson, Lenski, Frame, Ellicott, and Augustine believe that "his own vessel" means his wife, and the RSV states, "That each one of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor." Regardless, the idea seems to be that it might be done in holiness and honor by avoiding sexual sins. Christians in the male-female relationships are not to behave like those who know not God. The problem today is that Christians are exposed to and become very much a part of a sex-oriented society that is filled with immoral philosophies that are contrary to the will of God. Pre-marital sex has become acceptable behavior which is a departure from holiness and honor. When male-female relationships are based on the same attitudes as those that know not God, the same consequences

are often forthcoming.

When passion and sex are the main interests of single people it becomes more difficult to broaden interest into other areas that are very vital in marriage compatibility. The delights of "making out" with each other can blind one's perspective of the realities of responsibilities, obligations, and needs in the daily experiences in marriage. Many, who during courtship have been promiscuous, discover after marriage that they are not compatible at all.

**IS MARRIAGE LEGALIZED LUST?** It is true that Paul said, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman, but because of fornication, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband" (I Cor. 7:1-2) but no passage should be isolated and conclusions drawn from the isolated passage. Other passages present the need for love to be the real basis. Love does not exclude the gratification to be gained by every man having his own wife to avoid fornication. The insufficiency of a relationship built on lust is experienced by many a disappointed and lonely mate that believes that the marriage relationship is built solely on sex. It is important for the married people to ask, "Is it love or lust?"

After giving the great description of the behavior of Christian love, Paul said, "Make love your aim" (I Cor. 14:1). Certainly this would be good advice for all members of the family. In Biblical days courtship did not precede marriage, but love was to be developed after marriage. In our society today by courtship and engagement ample time can be given to the development of love before marriage. It is important for couples to enter into marriage with

confidence that they do love each other so that they can expect their marriage to be successful.

## RESEARCH AND STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. To understand love it is important to know a little about the Greek language. Do some research on the three Greek words – *Eros*, *Philia*, and *Agape* – that are translated love in the English language. What more can you add to the discussion in this chapter? Find where the different forms of *Philia* and *Agape* are used in the New Testament. Which words are used in I Cor. 13, Eph. 5:25; and Titus 2:4?

2. Read I Cor. 13, with some person (husband, wife, fiance) in mind to see if your love for him/her fits the characteristics.

3. Discuss the influence that T. V. and the movies have on the concepts of love today.

4. Can you kill love? How?

5. Discuss how love can soften the disappointments between expectations and performances in marriage, also how neglected disappointments might kill love.

6. Would it be wise to build a marriage on the principle of love at first sight?

7. How can an approach to marriage as discussed in I Thess. 4:3-5 influence courtship and marriage?

## Chapter VI

### CHRISTIANS ARE PREFERRED RISKS

*“And whatever you do, in word and deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him”* Colossians 3:17

MANY insurance companies have qualifications based on age and a lifestyle free from smoking and drinking alcohol that enable customers to qualify as preferred risks. This means that such people are expected to live longer, and that the company runs less of a possibility of the insured being a financial loss. Premiums are somewhat reduced for those that are preferred risks.

When two people from separate backgrounds decide to become one in marriage, there are risks that could be so great that the marriage could be a mistake. This is indicated in the number of broken homes and divorces. The risks are so great that some avoid the responsibilities of marriage and settle for less than marriage. Marriage need not be a complete leap in the dark for there are qualities that can be developed that reduce the risk of failure, so much that two people can enter into marriage with confidence that it will be a lifelong commitment to love and peace. Christians qualify for the classification of “Preferred Risks” to marriage.

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN? The importance of this question is obvious in developing this theme. First consider that not all religious people are Christians. The meaning of religion is, “to intensively bind to something.” One can be bound intensively to self

as King Saul was in his stubbornness and be guilty of idolatry (I Sam. 15:23), to humanistic philosophies, to denominational peculiarities, and to a number of other subjects. In such cases religion is divisive rather than unifying in family relationships. Further, not all people that go to church are necessarily Christians. Church attendance can be motivated by a number of influences other than to worship God and to hear the Word of the Lord. Church going might do very little to reduce the risks in marriage, because a lot of church goers are involved in broken homes.

**WHAT THEN IS A TRUE CHRISTIAN?** How does being a Christian reduce the risks in marriage? Please consider the following list as only a partial answer to this all-important question:

1. **A Christian is one who is bound intensively to God through Jesus Christ** (John 14:6). Imagine a triangle sitting on its base representing the husband and the wife at the ends of the base, and the peak at the top representing God. Such a diagram recognizes God as supreme and both husband and wife in subjection to God. The closer the husband and wife are to God in this triangle the closer they are to each other. A bride and groom reduced the risks in their marriage when they spoke their vows to each other in the ceremony by first of all answering in the affirmative this question: "Do you promise to love God more than me the rest of the days of your life?" A commitment to God first of all binds two people to each other because this is what God does in marriage.

2. **A Christian is a disciple of Jesus** (Acts 11:26). A disciple of Christ is a pupil, scholar, or

follower of Jesus Christ, properly described in the text, “whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:17). Being a disciple of Jesus gives everyone a common denominator based on the example of Jesus when he said, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me” (John 4:34). It is easy to see that risks are greatly reduced when all in a family relationship desire to do exactly like God desires.

**3. A Christian recognizes and respects the Bible as God's word.** If Christians are united in doing God's will as Jesus demonstrated, it is important to recognize how his will is communicated to man. The simple answer is found when Paul said, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (II Tim. 3:16-17). The Bible is the inspired effort of God communicating his will to man. Risks are reduced when all members of the family have the same constitution, the Bible, to build on for their individual lives, otherwise they may experience the futility of their efforts (Psa. 127:1).

**4. A Christian is a penitent believer that has submitted to baptism to be raised to walk in a new life in the church.** As a believer a full submission to God is symbolized in a common action of baptism following a death of sinful behavior (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:1-4). At baptism sins are washed away, and a new life is experienced in the church (Acts 2:47). The church as the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim. 3:15) provides an environment of love, constant instruction, and encouragement leading to

continued spiritual growth. A common goal of going to heaven and doing all that is necessary to attain the goal is characteristic of all baptized people (Col. 3:1). It is easy to see that risks are considerably reduced by being in the church that provides the fellowship, the encouragement, and the support in growing up to be an acceptable child of God like Jesus (Eph. 4: 11-16).

5. **A Christian earnestly tries to put to death the traits and behavior in his life that are sinful.** Any Christian marriage counselor could testify that as people embrace sin the risk factor threatening the family becomes greater. Sin can become a leavening influence involving more and more sin as it separates members of the family. The risks are reduced if the Bible is followed in literally putting to death the following listed thoughts and practices: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, covetousness, anger, wrath, malice, slander, foul talk, and lying (Col. 3:5).

6. **A Christian makes every effort to develop a Christian personality.** It is true that risks are reduced by putting away certain habits and thoughts, but to reduce the risks further it is very vital that the bad be replaced by the good. One cannot remain neutral long. Replacements are compassion, kindness, humbleness, meekness, patience, forbearing one another, and above all putting on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony (Col. 3:12-14). When love for each other and for God is present, differences are settled based on what would be pleasing to God. Just think what a difference this would make!

7. **A Christian is a happy person.** Everyone

is entitled to some happiness on earth and certainly this should be experienced in home life. Risks are increased where happiness is not known. Risks are reduced when happiness is built on a solid foundation and Christians have such a foundation (Matt. 5:1-12).

**MARRIAGE RISKS MUST AND CAN BE REDUCED.** Too much is at stake for marriage to be entered into without prayer and study. Two people must have more to base their future lives on together than the romance of the hour. Nothing is to be lost and everything is to be gained by proceeding toward marriage with caution. After marriage the rewards here and hereafter are worth pulling out all the stops to reduce the risks that families of today face. Happy, lasting, and successful families do not develop without effort, but are the results of all following the pattern of risk reduction in a world that seems to be going in the other direction. Becoming a preferred risk in marriage is worth working for.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What further hopes can you think of for Christians in marriage?
2. Why can it be said that not all people who go to church are necessarily Christians. Examples.
3. Why is it that many who claim to be Christians experience broken homes?
4. What are some of the risks that a Christian takes by marrying a non-Christian? Why then do Christians do this?
5. Is it a sin for a Christian to marry a non-Christian?
6. Give some good reasons for reducing the risks in marriage.

## Chapter VII WHO IS TO BE HEAD?

*“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church; and he is the Savior of the body” Ephesians 5:23*

IN Christian marriage the husband and wife become one (Matt. 19:6). Now the question: Which one? Do they both become the wife? Do they strive to become equally responsible in every respect? All of these possibilities should be rejected. If both become the husband, the wife loses her identity. If they both become the wife, the husband loses his identity. Organization and responsibility are necessary in human relationships, or frustrations will be common like two people trying to go through a door at the same time, or suffer the ineffectiveness of no pattern of decision making.

GOD HAS THE RIGHT AND THE ABILITY TO ANSWER THE QUESTION. A recognition of God as the Creator of all the good things in life including the institution of marriage, an awareness of the truth that God still demonstrates his love to mankind in spite of man's unworthiness, and an acceptance of the fact that it is to Him that everyone will give an account on the Day of Judgment should establish God's right to form the order of authority. Recognizing the wisdom of God and enjoying the beauty, the power, and the expanse of his creation should confirm his ability to answer this question. When alternative sources like traditions and the philosophies of men are used to answer this question, then one is deprived of the eternal wisdom

of God. Traditions, culture, modern inventions, and social changes influence the role of the man in the house, but every effort ought to be made for these changes in roles to be within the framework of God's expectations.

**THE HUSBAND IS TO BE THE HEAD.** God settles the question of who he wants to be head of the family and has communicated the answer to us through the Bible. Through the apostle Paul he said, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the church; and he is the Savior of the body" (Eph. 5:23). The ultimate in what a Christian family man ought to be is described in the qualifications of elders as, "One that ruleth well his own house having his children in subjection with all gravity; (keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; RSV) — For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (I Tim. 3:4-5).

The role of the husband as head of the family is often played down today in movies, television, and other expressions of humanistic philosophy so much so that men are frustrated and uncertain about their roles in the family. Boys find it difficult to identify with a future role that is definite, so they are uncertain in knowing what is expected of them. God's expectations do not change. Therefore, fortunate is the man that faithfully follows God's pattern for him.

**HEADSHIP IS NOT A LICENSE FOR IRRESPONSIBILITY.** Some wives find themselves uncomfortable in a submissive role because of the irresponsibility of their husbands. In such cases it is very difficult for a wife to take the well-meaning advice of others who say, "Let your husband be the head." It

is difficult to be in subjection to a man that stands for nothing, is very indifferent in all things, or is uncertain about himself.

There are men who are unprepared for family responsibilities, and who feel threatened by their wives to the point of being tyrannical in their family dealings. Such men stand on what they call their God-given rights and make it miserable for everyone in the family. They commend themselves on their harshness and strictness as they make semi-slaves of their wives and children. The Bible is not to be used for the justification of tyranny and abuse.

**CHRISTIAN HEADSHIP DEMANDS SELF-CONTROL.** Leadership is often viewed by the immature as a position where everyone serves the leader, but this is the wrong concept of true leadership. Christian leadership represents ability, training, and concern for others that can only be developed by courage and self-discipline. Self-discipline is very important as the Christian husband controls his life and responsibilities in his God-given role. Here are guidelines that can be helpful for a husband as he tries to head the family:

**1. Be capable of loving as Christ loved the church.** The pattern for the husband is Christ who loved the church and gave himself for it (Eph. 5:25). The very essence of love is giving as demonstrated by Christ. The opposite of love is lust which is more interested in getting than in giving. When this love as Christ loved the church is the basis in all family relationships, the wife and children have nothing to fear in submission as God encourages. A man that loves his wife will not make a slave out of her. He

will not abuse her because he is physically able to do so. Love controls his behavior in his relationship with his family.

**2. Cultivation of the maturity and intelligence necessary for leadership.** The man is to leave his father and mother (Gen. 2:24). No longer is he dependent on his parents, but can stand on his own. To stand erect and fulfill his responsibilities, he must use the mind that God has given him (II Tim. 1:7). The husband and father is often portrayed on television and in the movies as one who is very immature and does not have sense enough to get in out of the rain. Frequently, he is no more than a little boy and "is not with it." Models for the man in the family should not be foolish men, but they should be men who are trying to be like Jesus Christ.

**3. Possess a good degree of confidence in himself and his decisions.** Confidence in self should not mean that options and the opinions of others will not be considered, but should mean that because of self-confidence the door will be open for options and opinions to be weighed objectively before a decision is made. A good Biblical example of this is found in Joshua when he declared, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:25). He set the options before the people to face just as he had faced in his decision. There were the gods of the Amorites, other gods their fathers had served, and Jehovah that had brought them out of Egyptian bondage. He encouraged them to make the decision and choose that day the gods they would serve. Joshua declared boldly before them all what he and his house would do. Many families are saved with bold decisions, confidently made by the head of the

house. Confident leadership of the family helps qualify a man to be an elder in the church (I Tim. 3:4-5).

**4. Be a provider for the family.** Love and concern become aware of and provide for the needs of the family. The primary responsibility God places on the man was related by Paul when he wrote, “But if any (any man, SEB) provide not for his own, especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (I Tim. 5:8). Providing spiritual food is a responsibility fathers should not overlook (Eph. 6:4). Providing for the family creates many favorable conditions, such as the man can feel good about himself, he will receive respect from other members of the family, and the family will be moved to cooperate because of love and appreciation for him.

**5. Remember that the performance as the head will be evaluated by God.** All men stand before God at the judgment to give an account of their deeds on earth (II Cor. 5:10). Surely there is no doubt to the believer of God’s word about what the verdict will be when the infidel stands before him. A man that provides not for his own is worse than an infidel (I Tim. 5:8). Every Christian knows the need for his prayers to be heard to stay right with God, but the following behavior by husbands can influence their relationship to God. “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered” (I Pet. 2:7). Irresponsible husbands may escape their headship by their indifference and running away, but eventually

they will stand before God to give an account.

**AN APPEAL TO HUSBANDS.** Regardless of what others expect of you, God expects you when you get married to be the head of the family. This is a grave responsibility with consequences that can be very rewarding or very heartbreaking. Christian women, as well as God, want their husbands to be capable of being heads of the family. Do you feel good about your role in your family? Muster forth the will sufficient to discipline your life in fulfilling God's expectations for husbands. The cause of failure today in so many families can be traced back to the lack of responsibility on the part of the man in the house. The trend must be turned around before greater deterioration takes place in such families today.

**FACE THE FUTURE.** To assure the stability of future families, boys and young men should be trained in every home to be responsible people. In every way men who are not mature enough to face responsibility should be discouraged from entering into marriage.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Do you agree that to be productive a family like anything else needs to be organized? Why?
2. Does God have the right to state the proper order in the family? Has he?
3. Is the husband-wife relationship a 50-50 proposition? How would you explain it?
4. Is the headship for the man a traditional role or is it more binding?
5. Why is it that some men are confused

about their role as head of the family?

6. Why is it difficult for some women to let their husbands be head of the house?

7. How do some men abuse their responsibility in their role of authority?

8. What are some problems that develop in the home when the husband is unwilling or not qualified to take the headship?

9. Describe an ideal husband.

10. How do you feel about the following?

- a. Both taking the woman's last name in marriage.
- b. Having the last name a double name including both the husband and wife.
- c. Man staying at home while the wife provides the income.

11. What advice would you give parents in preparing sons to be husbands?

## Chapter VIII

### FATHERS ARE PARENTS TOO

*“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” Ephesians 6:4*

SINCE World War II the American father has spent less and less time as a father. In one study that was made of a small town in the United States, the fathers spent less than one minute per day on an average with their small sons. It would be difficult to find any other country in the world where fathers spend less time than this. It is past time for great emphasis to be put on the fact that fathers are parents, too, and it is very necessary for them to be active in this role.

What has happened in America that would take so many fathers away from their children? America is a very materialistic society with many members of the family wanting to keep pace with the rest of the world in material possessions. Fathers have given way to the pressures, and find that they have less and less time to be with their families in order to provide the demands of their families. Some irresponsible fathers feel it necessary to spend a great deal of time away from their families in selfish fulfillment in sports and recreation. The urbanization of the American family provides a multiplicity of work and activities to keep members of the family going in different directions. So the story goes, until now in America a home in which both the mother and father are available for support and instructions is the exception rather than the rule.

**FATHERS ARE NEEDED NOW.** God created the male and female in the beginning, therefore, initiating a male-female society. In order for this society to be propagated, it takes a male and female to produce an offspring. Likewise, in order for one to be adequately introduced and oriented into this society, it takes both male and female relationships. Single parents find some problems in rearing children to fit in a male-female society if children are isolated from one sex. So, fathers are needed.

The freedom the father has in not getting pregnant and in not breast feeding the baby should not be used as license for irresponsible behavior. Masculinity is not to be used as an excuse for not being around an infant. Studies indicate that early in an infant's life the father is an important figure. If a father waits until his children are teenagers to be a buddy to them, he will likely experience disappointment for his children as teenagers will want someone nearer their own age as a buddy and not a father that is a stranger.

Soon after World War II as juvenile delinquency was getting out of hand in America, a juvenile judge in Memphis, Tennessee, wrote in *Reader's Digest* that the solution was simple — "Fathers needed to be put back as heads of the family." Yes, fathers are needed now to be the authority figure in the home so that children might in an atmosphere of love be introduced to and cultivate respect for authority that is necessary in an orderly world.

**CHILDREN FACE SEVERE CONSEQUENCES WHEN FATHERS FAIL IN THE ROLE OF AUTHORITY.** Newspaper headlines are full of crimes with sad and tragic consequences that can

often be attributed to a poor father-child relationship in introducing a child to the world in the family. God in his word made predictions that seem to go on and on. Read the following and see how far reaching the influence of an irresponsible father can be: "The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Prov. 29:15). "A foolish son is the calamity of his father" (Prov. 19:13). "Whosoever keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father" (Prov. 28:7). "God gave them up . . . Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud boast-ers, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents" (Rom. 1:26-30). "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boast-ers, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy" (II Tim. 3:2). Although the Bible teaches that the son does not bear the iniquity of the father (Ezek. 18:18-20), the neglecting father can influence the child's environment so as to cause sins, shortcomings, and emotional scars to go on and on to other generations. Many parents as they experience sorrows in the consequences of their failures with their children wish that they had never had any children. Ann Landers in her research found that 70% of the parents surveyed were in this category. Tragic indeed!

**THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE TO FAILURE FOR FATHERS.** Not all examples and teaching in the Bible show results in failure and tragedy. What a joy it is to be assured from God's word that father-hood can be very rewarding! Listen to Psa. 127:3-5: "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord and the fruit of the womb is his reward, as arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of thy youth.

Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies at the gate." How refreshing this is! Happy is the man that has his quiver full! Quite different from Ann Landers' findings!

What are some of the factors that make the difference between success and failure as fathers? One can never go wrong if he goes to the Bible as he searches for the answer. Here are some expectations and roles God has for fathers:

**1. Provide for the family.** "But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (I Tim. 5:8). A father is interested in the needs of his children, for "What man is there of you, whom if his son ask for bread, will he give him a stone? . . . a fish, will he give him a serpent?" (Matt. 7:9-10). The obvious answer is "no." Children's needs can be broad, and a father is interested in providing them directly or indirectly.

**2. The parent primarily responsible for discipline.** "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). The man as husband, the head of the house, has been given the responsibility of discipline. This does not mean that the mother must not be involved, but it does stress the responsibility enjoined upon the father. Fathers are to be involved in discipline in its fullest meaning. They are to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and see that "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Prov. 1:8). Secondly,

chastening is to be administered “for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? but if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons” (Heb. 12:7-8) and “withhold not correction from thy child, for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die” (Prov. 23:13). The responsibility is best summed up with this quotation: “Train up a child in the way that he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6).

**3. A good example of a Christian father.** Children are in need of models to imitate. Their models should not be like Fibber McGee and Dagwood of decades ago or present-day TV fathers that are jokes and irresponsible, but they need their own fathers to be examples of Christian manhood. A good example of forgiveness is the father of the prodigal son. Sons and daughters need a good example of love who resists the temptation of giving things only, but gives much of himself to his children.

Children are to honor their parents (Eph. 6:2). By being a good example a child can find it easy to obey this command, otherwise it can be very difficult. The same is true toward the command, “Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father” (Lev. 19:3).

**YES, CHRISTIAN FATHERS ARE NEEDED NOW.** Every son needs a responsible father with which to identify and imitate for where else would it be so natural to learn responsibility? Responsibility is learned by being involved with a responsible person that cares enough to insist on responsible behavior. This cannot be done by giving things but demands the giving of self in time and effort.

A young man in high school was expelled because of his continual delinquent behavior. The principal permitted him to return on condition that his father return with him. When the father appeared with his son, he addressed his son in the presence of the principal with these remarks: "Son, I don't know why you behave like you do. I have given you a good home, a good car, a good allowance." The list continued, but finally the son interrupted by saying, "Yes, dad, you have given me all these things, but you have never given me any of yourself." The story might have been different had the father understood this reply early in his relationship with his son.

Every girl needs a father to help her better understand and relate to the opposite sex. She needs to hear about sex from her father as well as her mother. She needs to be able to disagree with her father and still know she is loved by him.

A young lady was seeking help from a counselor. She was still in her teens, had married, divorced, and was living with another man with her son. The counselor asked her how many men had she had sex with. Her reply was that she couldn't count them on her fingers. The counselor asked her about her relationship with her father. She began to cry, because they never had a good relationship although she wanted one. What a different story this young lady might tell had her father indicated he loved her from time to time. The young lady was so desperate for a relationship with a male that she couldn't say no to any proposition for fear the relationship would be broken.

King David was a good king, but there are indications he might not have been such a good father.

His son Absalom stole the hearts of the people away from David and led a rebellion against the king. David continued to protect his son as he commanded Joab and all the captains of his army that tried to put down the rebellion to deal gently with Absalom. Absalom was killed and here is David's lament when he heard it: "Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (II Sam. 18:35). Multitudes of fathers since that time have so lamented, but the lament comes too late. Willingness to die for a son does little good after the son's death, but just think if that same willingness to live for a son would come first what a difference it might make!

Children do not ask to be brought into this world. Fathers are responsible along with the mothers for their appearance, therefore, fathers should feel equally responsible. David's responsibility of being king of God's people may have been such that he gave his kingship top priority. He might have been justified in this, but is the father of today justified in going all out for his business, his profession, his ego-gratifying experiences, or his recreational activities so as to give them top priority? The modern father is needed and should draw back some on all these activities that take all of his time and live for and with those that he has helped bring into the world. If a father will do this, he will avoid the sad experience of lamenting, "Would God I had died for thee," and can know the joy of the promise, "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them (children)."

A challenge to all fathers is to fulfill God's expected roles for them so that their children might

be soon able to understand a loving, faithful, and forgiving heavenly father because their earthly fathers were forgiving. It will then be much easier for them to transfer a warm and trusting belief in almighty God. Fathers are parents, too, and important.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Find a description or make one of an ideal father.
2. What are some things that a father can do that are different from what a mother can do for the children?
3. How do the following sometimes interfere with the father's responsibility to his children?
  - a. Work
  - b. Recreation
  - c. Friends
4. Do the above always have to interfere? When do they? How can they be used for good?
5. How can a father-child relationship shape attitudes of children toward the following?
  - a. God
  - b. School
  - c. Church
  - d. Civil authority
6. List three good points that can be said about fathers today:
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
7. List current failures of fathers that you know about:
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.

## Chapter IX THE KEEPER OF THE HOME

*“The aged women likewise, that they may be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.” Titus 2:3-5*

WOMEN have been the object of abuse in the double standards that have been characteristic of most cultures. Abuses lead to movements that rebel against inequalities. Often movements pick up allies that they have little in common with at first and in time the cause is hindered or it can include too much in the rebellion. Such has been true with many women of today. They have had good reasons to rebel against abuses, but the women's liberation movement today has picked up support from homosexuals and other groups that have clouded the issue of a double standard.

Humanism expressed in *Manifesto II* (1973) has made an influential attack upon the sanctity of the home in recent years. Their document promotes divorces, abortion, euthanasia, and freedom to explore and engage in a variety of lifestyles. The authoritarian home with its rules and regulations is rejected, and they advocate the principle of participatory democracy for the home. Although it is not easy to identify the current feminist movement, it seems that in most cases this movement is a

complement of the humanist movement. It too seems to be a revolt against marriage and the home. Time is spent in trying to liberate women from the degrading roles of wives and mothers.

Women of today have to make up their minds, just as anyone else, about who or what will be the standard of right or wrong. The question is, will God be the authority or will unbelievers? The Christian woman does not hesitate to let God have his say in this matter. Christian teaching has elevated the status of womanhood wherever it has been of influence, and it will continue to do so.

**WOMEN ARE NOT SECOND-CLASS CREATURES OF GOD.** In the Old Testament more than one hundred mothers are mentioned, and the New Testament mentions eighteen. Some of these mothers were good and some of them bad, and a good deal of importance was given to the mothers in the history of Israel. Deborah was honored by Isaiah when he gave her the highest honor as "a mother in Israel" (Judges 5:7). Hannah was a symbol of motherly love (I Sam 2) as she dedicated her son to God and influenced his whole life. David gave tribute to motherhood when he described the deepest grief one could have as "one that mourneth for his mother" (Psa. 35:14).

In addition, the New Testament examples of motherhood can be seen in Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and Mary, the mother of Jesus. Timothy's mother and grandmother were mentioned by Paul as the ones that instructed Timothy in such a way that he said that he should continue in their instructions (II Tim. 3:14-15).

From different focal points there are

advantages in being a woman today and there are disadvantages. The same can be said about other members in the family. People should accept the sex they are and not rebel against it.

**WOMEN ARE RESPONSIBLE AND DO HAVE FREEDOM OF CHOICE.** This statement is made particularly in reference to marriage. Society from time to time may put pressure on for all women to get married. Since most women do get married and activities are structured around couples after the age of twenty-one, single women become the minority and there will be occasions when singles suffer from this. Such pressure is from society, not from God. Paul suggested in I Cor. 7 that there are times when a woman can be more devoted to the Lord and happier if she does not get married. Yet, this single life is not bound on a woman. She is free to do as she desires in this matter.

**WHEN WOMEN MARRY GOD HAS EXPECTATIONS OF THEM.** Regardless of what relationship a person enters, he undergoes changes as he fits into the relationship. This is true of both men and women in marriage. Anytime one changes from no relationship where self is the main consideration to a relationship that is considered in terms of "we," sacrifices of "I" are made. Women in love with their husbands do give consideration to their husbands' expectations. These should be discussed before marriage to see if she can fulfill these expectations. Such expectations or roles will vary from man to man, depending a great deal on the roles in which his mother participated. Consideration will not be given to these various roles, but time will be devoted to examining what God expects of wives and

mothers. What are the God-given roles? It is very important that women recognize these lest they go against God's word (Titus 2:5).

1. **To be in subjection to their husbands, as unto the Lord** (Eph. 5:22). Does this mean that the woman is inferior? Perhaps many women do view that the submissive role is an inferior role, but is this true? Not necessarily. For a home to exist orderly, there has to be leadership and there has to be a fellowship. God says that the man is the head (Eph. 5:23-24). To be in subjection does pose some problems if the husband does not possess the ability or desire to be the head. In such cases, what should the wife do? The simple answer is that she is to let him be the head, but this still does not provide the necessary leadership if the husband does not have the ability nor the desire. She has to fill the vacancy as best as she can while at the same time encouraging her husband to take his God-given responsibility.

The young unmarried lady needs to have God's expectations in mind before she goes into marriage. Prevailing thoughts should not be just can I please my husband, but can I please God in my marriage? Characteristics of the necessary leadership can be observed in a young man before marriage if a young lady so desires. Dating an irresponsible man can lead to marriage to an irresponsible man that may never fulfill the role of the head of the house. Therefore, care should be exercised in dating so as to marry a responsible man, and then the submissive one will not find that role objectionable.

This role is assigned to woman by reason of the transgression (Gen. 3:16). This does not mean she is

worth less than a man, but this is a functional role vital to fulfilling needs by orderliness in the family (I Tim. 2:11-14).

**2. To be a helper and companion to her husband.** When man was created God saw that it was not good for a man to be alone. The animals and atmosphere were not sufficient for man. So God brought forth the woman to be a help meet (Gen. 2:18 KJV, "a helper fit for him" RSV). Men and women are social beings and need others to fulfill this need, and Adam knowing this said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:23-24). Fortunate is the husband and wife that really cleave to each other as friends and companions. They should complement each other as they share responsibilities in bringing up children in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord.

**3. Bear children** (I Tim. 2:15). Great importance is placed on motherhood by God, and it has been extolled by poets and others. Women today are often led to believe that this role is not fulfilling, and perhaps this is true with some women. After a woman once becomes a mother, God expects her to accept this role seriously. Every child needs a mother to fulfill its emotional and physical needs, and the mother is equipped to do this. Reason would teach that since a baby does not ask to come into the world, and it is here, then the one that is physically able to fulfill the needs has the responsibility to do so.

Irresponsible motherhood is described in the Bible as being like an ostrich. "Gavest thou the

goodly wings unto the peacocks? Or wings and feathers unto the ostrich? Which leaveth her eggs in the earth and warmeth them in the dust, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them or that wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labor is in vain without fear; because God hath deprived her of wisdom neither hath he imparted unto her understanding" (Job 39:13-17). A mother does not fulfill her role as mother if she treats her children as though they did not belong to her. When once a child is conceived then there are responsibilities that go with that conception.

Most women are so emotionally composed that they find it natural to feel love and responsibility toward their children. In the contents of what older women should teach younger women was that they should love their children (Titus 2:5). The word for love here is one that relates to a warm, fuzzy feeling to their children. Often this is demonstrated in the hospital where the baby is born as the mother is observed gently holding the newborn baby.

4. **Keeper of the home** (Titus 2:5). The wife has the responsibility of the domestic affairs of the home. In this role she is recognized as queen of the home. In this role there is a great deal of variety depending on the time and place of reference.

When a home is established, then the role of a keeper is important. Most mothers and wives work outside the home. Careers and home keeping can conflict with each other. Many women have been able to do justice to both while many find they have to neglect one or the other. The Christian woman gives consideration to these questions:

Which responsibility is primary? In case of conflict, which one must have priority? Does my career take so much of my time and energy that my presence at home is not quality time? Am I sacrificing too much wife and mother time just to be able to purchase the luxuries of life?

**WORTHY WOMEN ARE TO BE PRAISED.** A study would not be complete without looking to the tribute given by Solomon in Prov. 30:10-31. She is more precious than gold as her husband trusts her and delights in her. She is very industrious as she goes about with her duties as keeper of the house. She makes the home a place of comfort and joy as she uses her talents in home decorations. She contributes to the economy of the budget by planting a vineyard and selling the products of her labor. Her foresight finds her prepared for the future. Her husband praises her and her children rise up and call her blessed because of her wisdom and understanding. Such find fulfillment in her works that praise her. Opportunity for fulfillment can still be for the keeper of the home.

#### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

1. What are some evidences of a double standard in male and female expectations in your culture?
2. What are some things sometimes identified with the women's liberation movement that makes participation questionable for some women?
3. Can a woman find fulfillment in being a wife or mother?
4. If a woman finds that she is unhappy with

her lot in life what are her options? Do they differ after she is married? After she is a mother?

5. What are some possibilities for the woman who has an irresponsible husband?

6. Are financial reasons always justifiable when applied to women working outside the home? Explain your answer.

7. Being keeper of the home with time-saving devices is not as time consuming as it once was. What can the keeper of the home do about this?

8. Under what circumstances can a woman be under stress when she has a career? What would you advise a woman to do to cope with conflicts between family and career?

## Chapter X BEFORE ANYONE SAYS "I DO"

*"Thus a married woman is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies she is discharged from the law concerning her husband. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies she is free from that law, and if she married another man she is not an adulteress"* Romans 7:2-3

THIS year in the United States approximately 4,000,000 people will say "I DO." Most of these will express in one way or another the usual commitment to each other, "Until death do us part." In the last decade studies that have been made estimate that between 65% and 70% of married people rate their marriage as being happy or very happy, leaving between 30% and 35% who did not achieve the desired happiness. Their unhappiness plus the fact that about one million couples will try to dissolve their marriage by separation, annulment, or divorce this year forces accountable people to conclude that something should be done before anyone says "I DO." If an automobile manufacturer has no better track record than this, the public would rise up and demand that something be done about it. More serious consideration should be given to this when we bring God into the picture who said through his word, "A woman is bound to her husband by the law as long as he lives . . . Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive" (Rom. 7:2-3).

There are state laws concerning age, the purchase of license, and qualifications that have to be satisfied before anyone can legally say, "I DO." But it is time for accountable people to go beyond just trying to satisfy civil law in preparation for marriage and to use their influence in helping the unmarried prepare intellectually, emotionally, physically, and spiritually for marriage. Many marital failures can be traced back to inadequate preparation for marriage. Marriage counselors often feel helpless as they try to save a marriage that perhaps would never have taken place had the couple paused long enough to face some facts about marriage before the wedding date. Christian counselors will continue to help married people keep their commitments in marriages, but the responsibilities for the counselor and the clients would be much easier fulfilled when there are more adequate preparations made for marriage.

Lists are available for brides-to-be to follow as they make the final plans for the wedding. Time is scheduled for the wedding announcements to be made, for invitations to be mailed, all the things to be included in the wedding rehearsal, etc., so that no traditional act will be left out. Brides find these very helpful as they check off the suggestions made day by day. Most of these lists include the material aspects of the wedding so that the bride and groom can participate in the wedding without embarrassment, and so that the memory of a great day can be a pleasant memory for years to come.

More essential than the available bride's list is a practice that should be added and considered very vital during the early engagement period, and

that is to set aside time for five or six sessions with a qualified marriage counselor. This premarital counseling fits in better at the early period of engagement because the closer a couple get to the wedding day the less productive the sessions will be because everyone increases their concentration on the events around the wedding. Premarital counseling can enable couples to enter into marriage with more confidence, or in some cases, with a more realistic concept of marriage, and couples can decide to postpone or cancel the wedding. For this reason premarital counseling fits in with the engagement period, for it is the last stage in courtship where a free choice may be exercised.

Couples are often reluctant to become involved with anyone in premarital counseling excusing themselves by saying, "We do not need it" or asking, "Will it really help us since we are deeply in love anyway?" Often couples overlook the fact that others have entered into marriage just as confidently, but they have become part of the statistics that speak of family deterioration. Authorities in marriage and family have been saying for years that preventative measures must be taken and can be effective in slowing down the rate of family breakdown through premarital counseling.

Evidences are being found that indicate the value of premarital counseling. The *Florence-Times* reported April 15, 1981: "In Toronto, nineteen churches participated in a project to test the effectiveness of a marriage-preparation program. The results: Partners who took part in the program had fewer marital conflicts in the first year of marriage than those who did not; when they did have

problems, those couples were better able to resolve them; and those that had premarital counseling were more likely to seek professional counseling promptly for conflicts they could not deal with themselves."

Since the upsurge of broken homes has developed, religious leaders have taken steps to prevent sick marriages and divorces. Denominations with centralized authority have developed policies calling for those who officiate at a marriage to provide adequate time for premarital counseling before they perform the wedding ceremony. Church leaders on a congregational level have made policies encouraging premarital counseling as a prerequisite for the use of the church building for a wedding. Some preachers will not perform a wedding ceremony without first spending a few hours with the couple in premarital counseling. What these religious leaders are saying is that something must be done to slow down this trend of broken homes, and that while they cannot take full responsibility for the outcome of a wedding, they can do something to better prepare couples for a successful marriage.

States are becoming concerned about the number of divorces granted each year, and the number of couples that may stay together but with little meaning for the family. Some states have passed a law that applicants for a marriage license under eighteen are required to undergo premarital counseling. In California one out of five of such couples either withdraw their application or were denied their license. More than likely, had no law existed demanding premarital counseling, these couples would have gotten married and later become part of the broken home statistics.

The trend seems to be that responsible people in the State government and in churches favor prevention of problems by premarital counseling, and rightfully so for both the church and the State are dependent upon the family for its present and future. The family is the cradle for the individual that will provide the State with strong or weak citizens as well as the church with weak or committed members. There is no substitute for a committed family. Couples contemplating marriage should want to be sure that they have the makings of such a family before they say "I DO."

What is premarital counseling? Kenneth Morris in his book, *Premarital Counseling*, on page 15 gave the following as a good answer to this question, "Premarital counseling is that form of counseling which centers around the personal relationship of a man and woman, helps them evaluate their relationship in view of their approaching marriage, and acquaints them with ways by which they may build a happy and successful marriage, or results in the deciding against the marriage." Compatibility is often assessed by taking certain tests that are available. Areas of common difficulties in families are discussed realistically and viewed in the light of tolerance of adjustability. Premarital counseling by a Christian counselor would include all intellectual, social, psychological, and spiritual aspects of the relationship.

Freedom of expression of fears and doubts prevail in a counseling relationship. For example, one young man expressed to his counselor that he would rather buy a new car and go west than get married in four weeks. The only thing he felt prevented him from doing this was the wedding

announcements had already been printed. This statement was taken as a danger signal too great to overlook, and the young man was encouraged to do what he had rather do. The young lady was brokenhearted and the family was embarrassed, but the honesty of the young man was appreciated in time, because the young lady eventually met and married a man that wanted to marry her above any other thing he could do. Premarital counseling in this case led to truth, an engagement was broken, but eventually a happy marriage followed.

Since society today does not give a lot of promise of security to couples contemplating marriage, every effort should be made to make it secure as God would want it. Perhaps events of the wedding day will never remove all the butterflies in the stomach, but it does not have to be a step that is no more than a leap in the dark. Premarital counseling can provide a basis for entering into marriage with confidence based on facts peculiar to the couple to be married. So before anyone says "I DO" they should seek the services of a Christian marriage counselor.

## RESEARCH AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are the requirements in your State that one must meet before they can obtain a license to marry?
2. Do you think the law is sufficient and covers everything that needs to be covered?
3. As a parent, what advice would you give to a son or daughter before they get married?
4. As a prospective bride or groom, what would you like to know about marriage before you

say, "I do?"

5. In this chapter a case was made for pre-marital counseling. If you are married, what might you have been better prepared for if you had had some counseling?

6. "Love is blind." What are some danger signals that can be overlooked in courtship that ill-prepares one to face after marriage? Why are they overlooked?

7. We are exposed to instant love and happiness in movies and television. How does this sometimes have an adverse influence on marriage preparation?

8. Relate some reasons for proceeding toward marriage cautiously today even more so than a few generations ago.

## Chapter XI

### HANDLING DIFFERENCES

*“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one.” Ephesians 5:31 RSV*

ANY two people that are joined in marriage bring their individual differences into marriage with them, because they come from separate backgrounds and the marriage ceremony does not change basic personality. Differences in family backgrounds produce differences that are often conflicting in role expectations, religion, use of money, sexual relations, in-law relationships, social activities, mutual friends, and handling children. Due to limited association in courtship and engagements and the emphasis on similarities before marriage, couples face their real differences in many cases first of all after they are married. Sometimes these differences surprise and shock couples, and they develop problems that can threaten the peace of the family.

The blow that differences bring can be softened somewhat by seeing human relationships realistically. In time all intimate relationships tend to bring out differences. Indifference in a relationship can be as destructive as differences. The intensity of love declared at the wedding does not automatically erase differences that are present. Loving people can be different even to the point of conflict. Therefore, young married people can expect differences to occur just as in all human relationships and to grow to the intensity of conflicts. Marriages survive depending on the way differences are handled.

Adjustments must be made to live peaceably together.

## WAYS PEOPLE HANDLE THEIR DIFFERENCES IN THE FAMILY.

1. **Compromise.** In most cases is a good method, for due consideration can be given to all that might be concerned in the family when no one is completely left out as a middle ground of agreement is found. Such consideration adds to the feeling of 'cleaving' or security in the relationship. Compromise may not be the best way of handling differences if it involves a compromise of convictions or commitment to God, since commitment to God should be considered primary by all.

2. **Accommodation.** Sometimes differences are so deeply embedded in a person's thinking and behavior that the mate recognizes the difficulty of changing and just accepts them. They may not be able to find a satisfactory middle ground so they tolerate each other as they are. Often opposing political views are handled in this way. The following incident illustrates this pattern: Several years ago at Big Springs, Missouri, a man small in stature was trying to get his wife who was rather large in a boat with the rest of his family. The crowded boat and the difference in the sizes of the husband and wife instigated some awkward action. Some young people were watching the efforts, and they reacted with loud laughter. After the man got his wife safely in the boat, he turned to the laughing young people and said, "You are laughing at my wife. She may be fat and awkward but she is a good wife and is a good mother of these children, and I

do not appreciate your humor." What he was saying was that the obvious differences were insignificant in view of the overall value of the expectations and needs of the family. There are differences that can be accepted in consideration to the mutual interests of the family.

3. **Table Discussion of Conflicts.** The discussion of differences is delayed until another time. If the discussion is put off until emotions are calmed down or until a more appropriate time this may be a good practice, but if it is a stalling tactic so as to avoid the discussion it more than likely will not be a healthy way to handle the difference. This is poor communication.

4. **Walk Off From the Conflict.** This is a little different from tabling a discussion because some people develop the pattern of reacting in this way to all the conflicts in the family. A man told his counselor that any time his wife brought up anything that might cause an argument he just walked away. This might be one way of avoiding an argument, but it also might be classified as irresponsible behavior for a husband or father. Very little is settled this way, and a lot of time may be spent away from home.

5. **Full Submission.** In the face of differences one spouse completely gives in without any argument and becomes very passive about everything. Families exist where such passiveness is characteristic and the wife has no impact in the family activities or the husband has no part in the family decisions. In either extreme the situation is unhealthy for often it leads to little or no involvement and may in time produce an explosion as the passive one finally

demands his or her rights.

**6. Develop a State of Hostility.** Sometimes where undiscussed and unresolved differences exist hostility is developed manifested in bickering and nagging. For example in in-law conflicts, excessive criticisms of the in-laws can be triggered by just the thought of a gift for them. Children and parents might find it impossible to discuss their minor differences calmly. A wife might resent the attention her husband gives to football on television and retaliates by refusing to participate in other activities of mutual interest with her husband. Nothing is settled by spite reactions but complications are often increased.

**7. Decide to Go Separate Ways.** Couples may view their conflicts as destructive and impossible to solve, so in order to survive, separation is tried. Some recognition is given to this method by Paul in I Cor. 7:10-11, when he said, "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord. Let not the wife depart from her husband: But if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: And let not the husband put away his wife." Situations might exist that would justify separation, but only when reconciliation is impossible. Warning is given against separation in I Cor. 7.

**8. Obtain a Divorce.** Far too many people handle their conflicts by divorce. Divorce is not the answer to conflicts as members of Divorce Anonymous are quick to testify. Divorce opens the door for other possibilities that might be as destructive as the conflicts divorcees are trying to escape, such as problems of bringing up children without both parents, unfulfilled sexual needs, loneliness, the temptation to marry into an adulterous union,

(Matt. 19:9) and remarriage itself can create situations and consequences worse than the conflicts in the first marriage.

**SOME CONFLICTS CAN BE AVOIDED.** Due consideration should be given by single people to select mates that represent a minimum of differences by marrying someone with a similar background and with similar values. During courtship and engagement can be a time of testing differences to see what differences can be tolerated. Differences that are intolerable will not disappear after marriage. Married people can avoid conflicts by properly handling their differences. Differences will come in intimate relationships and, in fairness to all involved, all are required to adjust. Success will depend on the adjustability of all concerned.

Members of any family can properly handle differences if they cultivate the same basis for their relationships as God expects in his family. God's family is populated with people from different backgrounds. The outstanding mark of discipleship was stated by Jesus when he said, "But this all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). The early Christians were admonished to "Put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col. 3:14, RSV). Differences can be resolved or reduced when approached in love. A love that "is not arrogant or rude . . . does not insist on having its own way . . . and not irritable or resentful" (I Cor. 13:5-6).

The ability to handle problems should be developed early in the marriage, for differences will occur in all stages of the family. The pattern to

follow is that the solution be based on love, understand the differences, and due consideration be given to each person involved. When this is done, properly handled differences will cement family relationships, and they will seldom develop to the conflict stage that will threaten family harmony.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Should one be disappointed if they become aware of differences in the husband or wife after marriage? Why?
2. Why do differences spring up after marriage?
3. Adjustments must be made for two people to live peacefully together. Who should do the adjusting?
4. Why is it difficult for a subjective person to make adjustments in his relationships?
5. Can you identify with any of the adjustment patterns mentioned in this chapter? Ask someone else if he recognizes any of your patterns of adjustments.
6. A frequent pattern is to develop a state of hostility. How can this pattern eventually destroy family relationships?
7. A mark of maturity is the ability to adjust to new and different situations. Give some examples of how parents can help develop this characteristic in their children and help prepare them for marriage.
8. What problems might an only child or the baby of a family have in making adjustments?
9. Show how a family is subject to constant change and that each change can be a crisis.

## Chapter XII

### THE CHURCH AND THE FAMILY

*“So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.” Ephesians 2:19*

RECENTLY the National Center for Health Statistics released their latest report stating that 1,181,000 divorces were granted in 1979 in the United States. The number of divorces has tripled since 1959. If divorces continue at the same rate, one has the right to be concerned about where the family will be by the year 2000 if the number of divorces triples again. How can this trend be turned around? Who should be responsible for turning the trend around? Does the church have any responsibility for turning the trend? All these questions are vital as they run through the minds of concerned people.

THE CHURCH HAS A MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY IN HELPING THE FAMILY BE AS GOD WANTS IT. Many congregations do very little for the family beyond providing them a place to worship and study. Indifference toward the needs of the family today by the church could be compared to a story that is told about the citizens of a village located at the base of a cliff. At the top of the cliff the log rails that served as a barricade near the footpath had decayed. Every few days someone would fall off the precipice and be severely wounded in the fall. After a while the citizens became aware that they should do something about the problem, so

they called a meeting. Since so many people were wounded at the base of the cliff, they decided to build a hospital so the wounded could have immediate attention. It is difficult to think that such a gathering of people could overlook the obvious, and not readily see that the first thing to do would be to replace the decayed rails. How are congregations like this story? Not enough responsibility is taken to help families avoid the pitfalls in today's world. Troubled families receive little attention until after they have been sorely wounded, or they are noticed after they are spiritually dead by having their names removed from the church directory.

The main support for the family as God would have it to be will not come from civil servants or from many in the helping professions, for often their services are based on humanistic philosophies of life. Because of this Paul's warning to the Colossian Christians is very timely as he said, "Be careful! Don't let anyone capture you with philosophy or misleading theories that can fool you. These come from human tradition and worldly standards, not from Christ!" (Col. 2:8, SEB). People are captivated today by theories that sound good to them, but when they are applied they tend to destroy the family. Do not expect to get full support from agencies and persons whose presuppositions are based on humanism.

The main support for the family as God would have it to be will come from God's family, the church. God instituted both the human family and the church. Since both are from the same source, it is understandable that they should be supportive of each other and dependent on each other. An

example of their interdependence is found in Paul giving the qualifications of bishops when he said, "A bishop must be . . . one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God)" I Tim. 3:1-8.

WHAT CAN THE CHURCH DO? Elders, preachers, and teachers should spend a lot of time thinking, praying, and searching for the answer to this question. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Provide frequent opportunities for the minds of all members to be saturated with the truth about what God expects from every member of a family. An occasional sermon on marriage and divorce is not enough to counteract the influence of the constant exposure people have to Godless philosophies relating to the family by television, movies, etc. People have the tendency to reproduce in their lives what they see and hear.

The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim. 3:15). The church has the responsibility of teaching this truth to all (Matt. 28:19-20; Eph. 3:10). Family conditions today are not too unlike family conditions in much of the world in the first century when men boldly spoke to family situations by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In addition to the teachings of Jesus on marriage in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the church today must keep constantly before its members the inspired teachings on marriage by Paul to the churches at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Colossae, and Thessalonica as well as his letters to

Timothy and Titus, plus the writings of James and Peter. Go through these books and underline all that is said directly about the family. The frequency of these references to the family indicated the need for such teaching, and the need for strengthening the family today demands a like need for frequently studying references made to the family in the New Testament.

2. **Utilize corrective measures when any family does not function as God would have it.** It has already been noted that the family of God should be supportive of the human family. Both families should have a great loyalty to God's word. The inspired word of God is profitable for reproof and correction, (II Tim. 3:16-17). The churches of Galatia were given this command: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). No fault is specified in this particular passage, but one would conclude that any participant in sin needs restoration, for sin separates one from God. (Isa. 59:2). True shepherds of the flock (elders in the church) are interested in restoring anyone that has been overtaken in a fault just as a shepherd feels responsible to his sheep that have strayed from the flock.

Frequently elders of the church like a hands-off attitude toward family problems. Little attention is given until the family falls over the cliff to destruction. Troubled families consult people outside the church for help and advice, and often the advice leaves out God's expectations for the family members. If the trend of broken homes is turned around

elders must be more active in being real responsible shepherds of the flock.

3. **When all else fails withdrawal of fellowship is in order.** Yes, the Bible encourages withdrawal of fellowship from those that do not meet their family responsibilities. The Corinthian church was encouraged to take such action when Paul said, "I wrote you an epistle not to company with a fornicator" (I Cor. 5:9). Another passage that would frequently involve family responsibility is this one: "Now we command you, brethren . . . that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly . . . For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all . . . and if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he might be ashamed" (II Thess. 3:6-14). God's attitude toward the lazy, irresponsible man of the family is expressed by Paul when he said, "But if any provide not for his own and especially those of his own house he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (I Tim. 5:8).

A failure to follow through in withdrawing fellowship weakens the church as it becomes populated with irresponsible people and in its weakened condition its efforts to stand for truth has little meaning in any community. Young people are often turned off from the church when they observe hypocritical family members in full fellowship of the church.

**RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH  
WAKE UP!** Both the family and the church are being undermined by doctrines of the devil today. What other conclusion can be drawn when the facts

of the rapid deterioration of the God-ordained institutions are faced? A saying attributed to Martin Luther is appropriate here: "If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and disgrace if he flinches at this point."

The battle is raging against the Christian family today. What can the church do about it? "Put on all of God's armor. Then you will be able to stand against the evil tricks of the devil. Our fight is not against men. No, it is against rulers, against authorities, against world powers of this darkness, and against evil spiritual beings in the heavenly world. This is why you must take up all God's armor. Then when the time for battle comes, you will be able to resist. And after you have fought your best, you will stand" (Eph. 6:11-13). So soldiers of Christ arise wherever you are and fight with God's truth for you are promised the victory.

## ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What responsibility does the church have toward family life?
2. Work out a syllabus for study for the congregation where you attend. See if you can use it to implement a study for the whole congregation.
3. What are some activities that the congregation where you attend can engage in to strengthen family ties?

4. Do you believe the church usually presents a sufficient amount of teaching on the family? Give reasons for your answer.

5. What is liable to happen when a troubled family seeks help from unbelievers in solving their problems?

6. Where would you go if you were having family problems? List the following in order of preference.

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Lawyer
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Mental health
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Preacher
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Psychologist
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. Elders
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. Some family member
- \_\_\_\_\_ g. Friend
- \_\_\_\_\_ h. A teacher

7. State why you would go to each one and include the advantages or disadvantages of each one.

## Chapter XIII THE ROLE OF SEX IN MARRIAGE

*“Male and female created He them.” Genesis 1:27*

SINCE the creation there has been the natural sexual attraction between men and women. Sex standards have developed ranging from celibacy to complete permissiveness with a great deal of variety from culture to culture. Some of these standards are as follows:

1. Sex for neither male or female before marriage.
2. Sex for males but not for females before marriage.
3. Freedom for lovers to do what they like as long as they do not hurt anyone.
4. Complete sexual permissiveness to do whatever you can get by with.
5. Sex based on situation ethics viewing sex from the total context of the relationship.
6. Justification of extra-marital affairs.
7. Sex forbidden for life for some.

Because of these various standards in different cultures or even within a culture it is difficult for adults to agree on a basis for moral sexual behavior. Since adults do not agree young people are confused about the proper place for sex in their lives.

GOD WHO CREATED MALE AND FEMALE SEES SEX AS GOOD (Gen. 1:26-28; I Tim. 4:4-5). Sex is fully discussed in the Bible in a favorable light for pleasure as well as for procreation (Deut. 24:5;

Prov. 5:18-20).

The Bible strictly condemns certain kinds of sexual behavior such as: adultery and fornication (Ex. 20:14, Eph. 5:3), homosexuality (Lev. 18:22; Rom. 1:19-27), beastiality (Lev. 18:23), incest (Lev. 20:12-16), and rape (Deut. 22:23-27). In these passages immediate punishment was recommended for the abuse of sex. The punishment commanded indicates the seriousness of the offense in the sight of God. Such abuses of today should not be taken lightly even if the culture in which we live legalizes such behavior.

Because the human being is capable of living in different sexual lifestyles God does not want him to use his ability undisciplined. Man was made in the image of God on a higher mental plain than mere animals. Therefore, with the restrictions God has made on sexual behavior man cannot afford to give way to his sexual urges uncontrolled like animals. By doing so the beauty of sex can become abused and ugly. Furthermore, we cannot doubt the wisdom of God on these matters because He can see from eternity to eternity and his judgments are based on such length of time and on what is best for man in the meantime, while man is more inclined to be tempted by the pleasure of the moment and overlook the consequences.

**GOD PLACED SEX IN MARRIAGE.** God is aware of the sexual needs of His creation, and He has taken care to place the fulfillment of that need in the proper place for all mankind. Paul discussed this with the Corinthians in response to a letter he received from them by saying, "Now concerning the things whereof you wrote unto me: It is good

for a man not to touch a woman, nevertheless to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (I Cor. 7:1-2). This passage informs us that the sexual act before marriage would be fornication, but after marriage it would be considered expected and acceptable.

Some reason that later on in the same chapter Paul said, "But if a man think that he behaveth uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will: let them marry" (I Cor. 7:36) – he gave approval for premarital sex. This reasoning takes, "Let him do what he willeth" out of context. In context the reference is made to marry or not to marry. Paul suggested under the present circumstances it was best not to marry, but if they could not properly control themselves that marriage was no sin. It would not be consistent of Paul to recognize premarital sex as sinful in the first part of the chapter and then endorse it later on.

**SEX IN MARRIAGE.** Sex is to be considered right and beautiful in the place where God has approved it, because sex is part of that creation that God saw was good. Sex is for both male and female to enjoy as their sexual needs find fulfillment. This is the implication presented when he said, "Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise the wife to the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband, and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife" (I Cor. 7:3-4). In the physical attraction they have for each other they in modern language, "turn each other on." So in marriage there is to be fulfillment for both. This

passage does not indicate that the act is only for the pleasure of the man, and the woman has to tolerate it.

Now, what are the aspects of the sexual need and fulfillment in marriage?

1. **Procreation.** “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28). Two people that love each other engage in sex with hope of producing a child, for this is the way God has designed for babies to come into this world, but is it the only function? Evidently not, for Paul would have had no reason to caution against the withholding of sex for a time, for if sex was only for procreation it would not be participated in very often anyway (I Cor. 7:5).

When God gave the command to “Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it,” this was a very important function for the family and it still is. To confine it to this would be to isolate a passage and not give consideration to other references. Such a practice does injustice to God’s word. Interest can be expressed in other aspects of sexual behavior.

2. **Pleasure.** A reaction to the philosophy of hedonism that makes pleasure a goal some believers in the past have had the tendency to frown on anything that was pleasurable. Pleasure was often considered un-Christian. This belief was reflected in some of the early religious writers like Jerome who wrote: “A wise man ought to love his wife with judgment and not with passion.” He also wrote, “He who loves his own wife ardently is an adulterer.” His advice to husbands was: “If we abstain from

coitus we honor our wives; if we do not abstain — well what is the opposite of 'honor' but insult?"

Pleasure is not to be considered sinful under all circumstances. The Christian has a right to rejoice and be glad and will experience pleasure as a by-product of doing what is right in the sight of God. Christians need to be fearful when pleasure becomes a goal as in hedonism and God is overlooked in the search for that goal. So justifiable pleasure would be true of sex in the right place and with the right person. Solomon did not condemn the young man for associating sex with pleasure, but he did say that these things should not be enjoyed with a strange woman but with the wife of his youth (Prov. 5:3-21).

God created man and woman capable of having pleasure in sex. There is no evil in utilizing what God has made in the way God intended and in the place he intended for the enjoyment to be experienced.

**3. Release from tension build-up by sexual needs desiring periodic satisfaction.** Husbands and wives are so made that there are sex drives stimulated by their intimacies that need satisfying. If satisfaction does not come tension can build up and can have a very negative influence on their relationship. These build-ups can be coped with without sex with sufficient self-discipline by the Christian if necessary, but it is so much better if the relationship is spared from such strain that tension builds up. It is much healthier if there is a release from the tension in an acceptable and pleasurable way.

**HOW IMPORTANT IS SEX IN MARRIAGE?**  
It is so important that God advises through Paul to, "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with

consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer, and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency" (I Cor. 7:5). It is so important that God says do not withhold it. The previous verses state that the husband and wife influence each other, and that they get married so they can have sex without committing fornication, so if they don't get sex in marriage the one that prevents the experience is defrauding the other one. It is so important that it is only under the following conditions that sex is to be withheld:

1. By common consent.
2. For a good cause like giving self to prayer.
3. Only for a short time lest Satan tempt them with fulfillment with someone else.

The conclusion from the above passage is that sex is a very important component in marriage, but it is not to be considered the one and only component. There are many areas in family relationships that require adjustments. One area can influence another area, and it is not always wise to isolate one area and conclude that it is the one factor in a conflict. Conflicts can exist in the area of finance that can influence sexual behavior. A man could have such a deep feeling of resentment towards his wife because of his belief that she just lives with him to get his money that he could be turned off from her in her presence. On the other hand, when the sexual adjustments are very poor other areas can be strong enough to endure in the relationship without sex. The dilemma that often is faced is a failure to cope

with the facts of nature. There are sexual needs that seek satisfaction just like other needs, but with sexual needs there are no substitutes that can be run in for the fulfillment of these needs without committing sin. Hunger presents a need for satisfaction. If the wife is not a good cook, or she has not prepared the evening meal, a man can satisfy his hunger by going to a substitute like a restaurant, but with sexual needs he does not have the same options. There is no acceptable way he can have his needs satisfied if his mate is too busy, not interested, or too tired. The woman faces the same dilemma. No doubt this is the basis for saying "only for a time lest Satan tempt you." Temptation is greater for sexual immorality when the husband-wife relationship is not satisfactory. When a person is not intimate with his/her spouse he/she is ready for an affair.

**WHY DO SOME NOT FIND SEXUAL SATISFACTION IN MARRIAGE?** This is an important question that ought to be explored, especially by those who might be involved in a marriage that is not satisfying. An unmet basic need can be the infection point of discontent that could eventually destroy the relationship. The failure to have satisfaction sexually is not justification for sinning either, for sin separates one from his family as well as from God.

1. **It is not because of physical inability because God made US male and female.** It is true that there might be some exceptions like physical defects and injuries, but in most every case a husband and wife are capable of having sex. Some justify pre-marital sex as necessary to find out if they are compatible sexually. This is a useless experiment because

people due to creation can depend on the physical ability, and one does not have to sin to find out. Premarital sex can predict very little, for often the circumstances for the experiment are not normal. So why risk what sin can do to find out nothing?

**2. Ignorance of biological and psychological knowledge.** There is a void of knowledge even in modern times for some people that enter marriage. There is the idea that both can do just what comes naturally and all will be great, but they soon find out that this is not the case. The unlearned are disturbed and disappointed when they find that satisfaction is not immediate for both. The psychological factors have a definite influence on the satisfaction enjoyed. Often husbands are shocked because their wives change from a passive role in sex to protest their displeasure because they feel like through the years their husbands only interest in them is sex. It is very important that the sex act be in marriage a love act rather than a lust act. If it is a love act there is a sensitivity for the feelings of the mate and an awareness of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Love will motivate toward making sex a mutually satisfying experience.

**3. Poor attitudes toward sex.** Attitudes are formed by the society around, like the teachings of parents, exposure to philosophies through songs, movies, and television, and the teachings of the church. Not all of these sources have made positive contributions toward sex. Mention has already been made that some church leaders today have a more positive view of sex in the family.

Sometimes the introduction one has to sex shapes the attitude and develops inhibitions that can

be harmful in later years. For example, children are often introduced to aspects of sex by being warned not to get in a car with a strange man or something bad will happen to them. Some are told to run as fast as they can away from a man that might try to expose himself. Real reasons for these warnings are not understood, but whatever it is, it is bad in the impression such warnings make. The negative impressions that are made plus the fact they may never have the opportunity to talk about them can cause inhibitions and lead toward the attitude of the overall impression that everything about sex is bad. These hush-hush things cause inhibitions and not as some psychologists teach that unfulfilled sexual desires cultivate inhibitions. Their advice is to avoid inhibitions by fulfilling sexual drives as soon as they sexually mature. This is not true. When two adults are attracted to each other sexually, but they refrain from sex because they love each other and God, they will not develop inhibitions anymore than if a man who disciplines himself not to kill another when he is angry enough to do so. The exercise of self-discipline when a person knows what is happening and wants to wait until it can be done in a moral way does not threaten the future enjoyment of life.

**WHAT CAN BE DONE WHEN THERE IS NO SEXUAL SATISFACTION?** Sex drives are different from male and female and from individual to individual. This naturally makes the possibility of frustrations, conflicts, and unhappiness. So what can be done?

1. **Accept the fate that sex is not enjoyable**

**and do nothing to adjust.** This is dangerous because often on the part of one satisfaction is sought outside of marriage.

**2. Restudy the teachings of the Bible to cultivate a more positive attitude toward sex.** God made men and women capable of having sex successfully.

**3. Strengthen love for each other.** The failure to adjust often leads to conflicts and bitterness. By strengthening love each becomes more sensitive to the other in understanding reactions. This could develop an awareness of what is acceptable about sex and what is objectionable.

**4. Realize sex drives vary.** They are not simultaneous for both. Self-control could lead toward mutual satisfaction.

**5. Understand the importance of emotional and psychological factors.** Love, acceptance, respect outside of sex enhance the joy of sex. The absence of these outside sex can cast a threatening shadow on sex.

**6. Seek counseling.** Frequently two people who are involved are too close to the problems to see them objectively, which is necessary if the problems are solved. Someone trained in counseling can help.

**CONCLUSION:** Sex in marriage is approved of God and is important. A satisfactory sexual adjustment has many rewards, while a poor sexual adjustment, reflecting problems in other areas, can open the door that can make family life miserable and tax self-discipline to the limit if one stays sexually pure. Therefore, the role of sex in marriage should not be taken for granted, but every effort

that is right should be made to experience satisfaction and pleasure in the “two shall become one flesh” in all its meaning.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Review the standards of sex mentioned in this chapter and identify the standards recognized by your friends and acquaintances.
2. What reasons do your acquaintances give for their beliefs about participation in sex?
3. What objections do you hear about sex being confined to marriage? Are they justifiable?
4. What are some consequences of sexual promiscuity in the following situations?
  - a. Preparation for marriage.
  - b. Trust in a husband-wife relationship.
  - c. Security of children.
  - d. Relationship with God.
  - e. Confusion between love and lust.
5. Who do you think should be responsible for sex education? List in order of preference.
  - a. Parents
  - b. Schools
  - c. Friends
  - d. The church
6. What problems are encountered by those who try to tell you all you need to know about sex?

